

Trainees' Forum

Contributions are welcome from trainees on any aspects of their training

The Collegiate Trainees Committee

By HELENA WATERS, Chairman, Collegiate Trainees Committee

Trainees in psychiatry have a unique opportunity to contribute to the policy and decision-making within the College, not only on matters relating to training but on broader issues facing psychiatry as a whole. This has been made possible by the introduction of Inceptorship (see *Handbook for Inceptors and Trainees in Psychiatry**) and by the more recent formation of the Collegiate Trainees Committee (CTC). The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the only college which encourages trainees to join as 'junior members', and gives them the opportunity to contribute actively in its working. I would like to review the progress of the CTC since its first meeting in September 1979.

John Hamilton (*Bulletin*, June 1979) has described the transition from the Working Party of Trainees (WPT), a sub-committee of the Education Committee, to the Collegiate Trainees Committee. This is a Special Committee of Council with direct responsibility to Council and in effect it functions as a 'Junior Council'.

The Committee consists of 36 trainees, 4 ex-officio Members (the Dean and three Sub-Deans) and two co-opted Members. Each Division of the College is represented by one senior trainee and two Inceptors, except that Scotland and Ireland each have two senior and four Inceptor representatives. All trainees who are Members or Inceptors of the College are entitled to vote, and voting is conducted on a Divisional basis.

Representation on every committee

At the first meeting of the new Committee three officers were elected and members were selected to sit on each of the six Standing Committees of the College and on the six Specialist Section Committees. Positions were also filled on nine other College subcommittees and working parties (see *Bulletin*, January p. 14; February p. 34.) In addition the senior trainee and one of the Inceptors for each Division was elected to the Divisional Executive Committee (see page 76). The three officers all sit on Council and the Chairman is a member of the Executive and Finance Committee. All trainee members have the same voting rights as other committee members and so trainees' opinions are presented on all of the official College committees except the Court of Electors (by constitution comprising of only Fellows of the College) and the Central Approval Panel. Meetings of the CTC are held to coincide with the Quarterly Meetings of the

College, and five have been held to date. In addition, two weekend residential meetings have been held in Stratford-on-Avon in October 1979 and October 1980. These have provided an opportunity to meet more informally and to allow issues of importance to be discussed in greater detail, as the Quarterly Meetings never seem to be long enough to discuss the business that comes the way of the Committee!

For some of the trainees it is the first experience of committee work and many find the workings of the College complex. We have therefore invited a 'guest speaker' to each of our meetings to introduce a topic for discussion and to present relevant information, thus allowing for a more informed discussion. The CTC has continued to discuss many of the issues passed down by the original Working Party of Trainees. These include approval visits, examinations (MRCPsych and DPM), manpower, the problems of women and overseas trainees, and part-time posts. In addition to business raised by those members sitting on the various College committees, we are also asked to comment on documents produced by the College, the DHSS and other bodies e.g. 'Patients First', 'The Royal Commission on the NHS' etc. The Committee was represented at the Examinations Forum held at the College in December 1979 and four members presented papers at the ninth psychiatric tutors' conference in September 1980.

Working parties

In view of the complexity of some of the issues and the limited time available for the Committee to meet as a whole, two working parties have been established. One has been dealing with the complicated manpower situation—e.g. it is not possible to discuss such things as rotational training schemes, requirements for training in subspecialties etc. without first paying careful attention to manpower considerations. Our other working party is grappling with the very contentious issue of examinations. We are aware of the need to make provision for the phasing out of the DPM and have also considered in detail the MRCPsych. The working party hope shortly to produce a document with recommendations for improvement of the present examination (see below), including more emphasis on clinical skills, and also guidelines for changes in the style of the exam in the future. Suggestions range from the use of videotapes and simulated patients through to courses in 'examining techniques' for examiners. Trainees naturally are concerned about the lack

*For review see page 71.

of standardization in the exam, and the working party are paying particular attention to this.

Trainees' days

One of the important tasks of the Committee is to make contact with trainees in all areas and not just in the teaching centres. Trainees' days had already been held in some parts of the country before the inception of the CTC. We are anxious to establish them in each Division as regular, official College meetings, thus allowing trainees to come together once or twice a year. The meetings function as a teaching occasion, but also serve the very important purpose of bringing isolated trainees together and providing a forum for the airing of grievances, exchange of experience and dissemination of information. It enables the members of the CTC to hear from a large number of trainees and therefore to better represent them in the College. Senior members of the College have been invited to speak at several of the meetings and have found the experience of meeting junior psychiatrists in this way most rewarding. Trainees are often suspicious about what goes on in the College—trainees' days provide an opportunity to dispel some of their fears.

Divisional lists

Contacting all trainees by post has always been a problem—the College computer contains only the names of Members and Inceptors; unfortunately this is only a fraction of the number training in psychiatry. The CTC has therefore been compiling lists of trainees on each of the Divisions. We hope to keep these lists as complete and up-to-date as possible and would be pleased to make them available to anyone requesting them for research purposes etc.

Irish visit

Unfortunately, Irish trainees were poorly represented on the WPT, and this has been rectified in the composition of the CTC. The Irish members have contributed actively since the start, and it quickly became apparent that trainees in Ireland, and especially some of those in the Republic, were experiencing difficulties relating to career structure and training opportunities which were different from those in most other centres. In order to investigate the situation more fully and to clarify some of the discrepancies reported, Patricia Casey (Midlands) and I (Southern) visited Ireland in July 1980. Over five days we met trainees and tutors in all three training centres in the Republic and also in Belfast and Londonderry in the North. The final day of the visit was spent in Dublin, where about 100 trainees from all over Ireland came together for the first Irish trainees day. As a result of the visit, and of that day in particular, many changes are already

afoot and communication between trainees in the teaching centres has improved.

The future?

The electoral wheels will shortly be set in motion to select members for the new Committee to take office after the Annual Meeting in July 1981. Those wishing to continue on the Committee will stand for re-election, but several senior members are not eligible. It is to be hoped that enough of the original members will be re-elected to allow for a greater continuity than was possible with the original WPT. I feel sure that as a result of the interest expressed in trainee opinion and the welcome that we have all received, the CTC will become a very active and important committee in the College.

I would strongly recommend that any trainee interested in learning more about the College, wishing to gain experience in committee procedure and concerned to improve psychiatric training should stand for election to the CTC.

Present Trainee Members of the CTC

Division	Senior trainee	Inceptor
Chiltern/Thames Valley	D. Costain	D. Bowker Patricia Brooks
East Anglia	Hema Ghadiali	Geraldine Holt D. Senior
Irish	Brid Corkery J. N. Scott	Mary Cleary E. McEwen J. O'Riordan O. Shanks
Midlands	K. Dwivedi	Sue Phillips (Secretary) Patricia Casey
North East	D. Srinivasan	S. Baugh A. Constantopoulos (Vice-chairman)
North West	F. Margison	C. Glancy Thiru Rajamanickham
Scottish	I. Pullen J. Riddell	Flora Botica M. El-Wahab J. Gallagher P. Thomas
Southern	Helena Waters (Chairman)	Alyson Hall L. Sireling
South West	Carol Trotter	K. Craig D. Martin
Wales	R. Scorer	Kay Callendar P. Marshall