and is amenable to cognitive–analytic therapy. This may indeed be so. Unfortunately, from my perspective, it does not solve the problem, if only because the psychoanalytic concept of borderline personality only embraces a small part of personality disorder as a whole. Dr Ryle also asserts that 'the need is . . . for an understanding of persons' and has no sympathy with my (and, I presume, Dr Bennett's) interest in 'underlying cerebral mechanisms'. Many psychotherapists would agree with him. But I still have to insist that we must agree what is implied by the term mental illness before we can decide whether personality disorders are mental illnesses or not, and that the forensic issues involved mean that this is not a trivial issue.

Professor Pilgrim asks, perhaps with tongue in cheek, whether Scadding's definition of disease (not mental disorder) implies that being male or poor are diseases. The answer in both cases is, of course, no. Scadding's definition refers explicitly to variation 'from the norm for the species', so the reference group for a putative male disease would be the life expectancy of other males. Likewise, poverty is a handicap imposed by the environment which may increase the risk of several diseases, and thereby reduce life expectancy, but is not itself a disease. For similar reasons, living in a zoo rather than a natural habitat is a disadvantageous environment for many wild animals, not a disease of wild animals, despite the implications for longevity. More importantly, Professor Pilgrim refers to the 'logical superiority of a dimensional over a categorical approach' to the classification of personality disorders and chides psychiatrists for what he regards as their inappropriate attachment to categories. I would argue that the relative merits of categorical and dimensional classifications is an empirical issue rather than a matter of logic, and that their relative advantages and disadvantages may vary with the purpose for which the classification is to be used. In fact, it is explicitly recognised in ICD–10 that personality disorders 'represent either extreme or significant deviations from the way the average individual . . . perceives, thinks, feels, and particularly relates to others'. It is also on the cards that in DSM–V the American Psychiatric Association will replace its present categorical classification of personality disorders with a set of dimensions.

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Patient adherence with antidepressant treatment

Reading the article by Pampallona *et al* (2002) on patient adherence in the treatment of depression, I sought in vain for any overt indication that mental health service users themselves were routinely being asked for their views, either by practitioners or by researchers. 'Patient education' and 'education of the patient's family' may well be interventions worthy of study, but methodologies used to look at this problem appear to fail to take account of what mental health professionals can learn from patients, families and carers.

A recent survey of over 2600 service users and carers, undertaken by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, the Manic Depression Fellowship and Mind (Hogman & Sandamas, 2001) found that 27% had not had their medicine discussed with them, 46% had not received any written information about the possible side-effects of medicine, and a startling 62% had never been offered a choice of medicine. The survey concluded that, 'Positive outcomes are increased if people are informed about their choices, allowed to choose and given their choice'. This message seems slowly to be seeping into the consciousness of our political masters, with Hazel Blears, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, actively promoting increased informed choice for patients, including treating patients as partners in care, and giving them the confidence to take control of their own treatment. When the medical profession as a whole can embrace this in respect of patients with a mental illness then, unlike Pampallona and his colleagues, we may be some way nearer to finding out what interventions work successfully.

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Hogman, G. & Sandamas, G. (2001) *A Question of Choice*. London: National Schizophrenia Fellowship.

Pampallona, S., Bollini, P., Tibaldi, G., *et al* (2002) Patient adherence in the treatment of depression. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **180**, 104–109.

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In an interesting article, Pampallona *et al* (2002) reviewed the literature concerning patient adherence in the treatment of depression. The outcome of most studies revealed that interventions to improve adherence tend to be successful in most cases, although it is not completely clear which interventions may be the most helpful.

In our view, the most important goal in trying to enhance adherence is to improve treatment outcome. Pampallona *et al* stated that 'the important relationship between adherence and outcome of treatment has been evaluated only in one study'.

When we reviewed the articles that Pampallona *et al* included in their article, however, we identified at least four studies that addressed the relationship between adherence and treatment outcome.

Katon *et al* (1995, 1996) demonstrated that multifaceted interventions improved adherence to antidepressant regimens in patients with major and with minor depression. The interventions resulted in more favourable outcomes in patients with major, but not minor, depression. In a more recent study of the same group (Katon *et al*, 1999) patients in the intervention group also had significantly better adherence to antidepressive medication and showed a significantly greater decrease in severity of depressive symptoms over time and were more likely to have fully recovered during follow-up at 3 and 6 months. Peveler *et al* (1999) found that counselling about drug treatment significantly improved adherence. Clinical benefit, however, was seen only in patients with major depressive disorder receiving doses $\geqslant 75$ mg of a tricyclic antidepressant.

These findings provide evidence that interventions can enhance adherence and can increase the response rate in patients with major depression who are treated with an adequate dosage of an antidepressant agent. With respect to minor depression results are less convincing.

Katon, W., Von Korff, M., Lin, E., *et al* (1995) Collaborative management to achieve treatment guidelines. Impact on depression in primary care. *JAMA*, **273**, 1026–1031.

—, Robinson, P., Von Korff, M., *et al* (1996) A multifaceted intervention to improve treatment of depression in primary care. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, **53**, 924–932.

—, Von Korff, M., Lin, E., *et al* (1999) Stepped collaborative care for primary care patients with resistant symptoms of depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, **56**, 1109–1115.

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.181.1.78-a Published online by Cambridge University Press

Pampallona, S., Bollini, P., Tibaldi, G., *et al* (2002) Patient adherence in the treatment of depression. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **180**, 104–109.

Peveler, R., George, C., Kinmonth, A.-L., *et al* (1999) Effect of antidepressant drug counselling and information leaflets on adherence to drug treatment in primary care: randomised controlled trial. *BMJ*, **319**, 612–615.

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Authors' reply: The point raised by Mr Lawton-Smith is of the utmost importance, but we found no published randomised studies that considered patients' perspectives as an entry point for interventions to improve compliance. To fill this gap, our group has recently completed a qualitative study involving patients, families and therapists to identify their concerns with adherence and to design effective interventions. We agree with Mr Lawton-Smith that much remains to be done to adapt research methodologies and clinical practices to the needs expressed by people with mental illnesses.

Vergouwen & Bakker incorrectly attribute our statement, 'the important relationship between adherence and outcome of treatment has been evaluated only in one study' to randomised interventions, when it referred to descriptive studies, both in the Results and Discussion sections. Out of the 14 randomised interventions we reviewed, only five reported data on response which could be extracted. In addition, the design applied by the five studies made it impossible in our review to explore the relationship between intervention and response.

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Cost of somatisation

Steven Reid and colleagues (2002) have introduced a welcome addition to the UK literature on somatisation with their clear demonstration that unexplained symptoms may be associated with significant use of secondary care health care resources. They emphasise a key point, repeatedly demonstrated, that somatisation is expensive for health care systems. However, their report may tell us more about the behaviour of doctors and health care systems than the behaviour of patients.

By selecting only frequently attending patients, they have controlled for the most important variable in cost of out-patient care, the cost of out-patient attendances. Their own figures show that the costs of attendances represented 74.5% and 85.9% of total out-patient care costs for somatising and non-somatising frequent attenders, respectively. They refer to a major US study (Escobar *et al*, 1987) which demonstrated very high rates of use of secondary care medical resources among patients with separately diagnosed somatisation. By controlling for attendance in their study design, they have almost certainly diluted the apparent impact of somatisation on secondary care use in this sample – an impact they rightly emphasise.

For a significant number of these frequently attending patients, negative investigations were followed by a repeat of the cycle. Those with repeatedly unexplained symptoms were designated 'somatisers' by the authors, implying a disorder in the patient. The medical response to these symptoms may in fact be as important in explaining continued resource use. The reasons why doctors behave in these characteristic ways are less than clear – our inability to live with uncertainty, our unwillingness to go with our judgement. Recent attempts to emphasise the importance of the issue are welcome (Bass *et al*, 2001), but until we more clearly understand doctors' behaviour when faced with these patients, we may remain simply counting the considerable costs.

Bass, C., Peveler, R. & House, A. (2001) Somatoform disorders: severe psychiatric illnesses neglected by psychiatrists. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **179**, 11–14.

Escobar, J. I., Golding, J. M., Hough, R. L., *et al* (1987) Somatization in the community: relationship to disability and use of services. *American Journal of Public Health*, **77**, 837–840.

Reid, S., Wessely, S., Crayford, T., *et al* (2002) Frequent attenders with medically unexplained symptoms: service use and costs in secondary care. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **180**, 248–253.

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Recruitment of psychiatrists

Brockington & Mumford (2002) and Storer (2002) target a topic of major concern in their thoughtful papers on recruitment to psychiatry. I was particularly interested in the comments on 'Background factors affecting the recruitment of psychiatrists' (pp. 308–309). In 1998 an article of mine was published concerning a small-scale survey of the characteristics of consultant forensic psychiatrists (Prins, 1998). As part of this survey, I asked 37 consultants (of whom 30 replied) what had led them to take up (a) psychiatry and (b) forensic psychiatry. (Other questions concerned attractions and difficulties in the latter field.) I am concerned here only to detail some of the responses to question (a). I discovered that some clinicians have indicated background influences publicly. For example, Professor Pamela Taylor has stated that, 'Two of the more powerful influences in my personal background were chronic, deteriorating neurological illness in the family, and the Church' (Taylor, 1997: p. 20). Professor Robert Bluglass has written with considerable candour and humour about the persistence of his early efforts to enter medical school (Bluglass, 1996: p. 96). Less publicly, some of the respondents referred to similar experiences – for example, serious illness or exposure to the suffering of others, particularly within the family or as a result of experiences in the armed forces. Several came from backgrounds in medicine; interestingly, for some, school influences seemed very important. Overall, a dominant theme that emerged was of an interest in people rather than in 'illness' *per se*. However, a few appeared to have entered psychiatry almost by default (the word is not used here in any pejorative sense): 'I was too clumsy with my hands for surgery'; 'I was not physically suitable'. Mine was a very small-scale survey but happily confirmed by Brockington & Mumford's findings; namely, that a decision was taken at a fairly early age to enter medicine, with a later decision to enter psychiatry. These seemed to be determined largely by a feeling of lack of satisfaction with the less personal and holistic aspects of other specialist medical practice. Since schools and other early experiences seem to be quite influential, it may be that more attention should be paid to this aspect than has been the case hitherto. The interesting

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.181.1.78-a Published online by Cambridge University Press