

SPECIALIST NURSES

DEAR SIR,

It appears from David Goldberg's review (*Journal*, September 1977, **131**, 320) that he would like to restrict lorry driving to pilots even when lorry loads are not delivered.

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DEAR SIR,

Professor David Goldberg's witty review of our book *Nurses in Behavioural Psychotherapy: An Advanced Clinical Role for Nurses* (which he generously describes as an important monograph) should not distract attention from its findings.

He likens the nurse-therapist to a lorry-driver-turned-pilot, becomes captivated by his analogy and finds himself 'as a passenger, when bad weather comes' preferring a pilot 'with some smattering of aerodynamics'. We are glad that Professor Goldberg is so confident of finding himself an experienced pilot, or perhaps he never intended actually to fly. For most of the population, pilots are unavailable for public transport, and private charter is beyond their means. In any case his is a loftily elitist attitude towards both lorry-drivers and nurses. Is the smattering—or anything else—intrinsically beyond them?

The fact is that nurse-therapists have worked through some very heavy weather indeed, and the book showed that they proved, in behavioural psychotherapy, as skilled and as effective as psychologists and psychiatrists.

Argument by analogy is said to be the hallmark of the clergyman, but if analogies are to be used there may be a place for the more accurate as well as for the more amusing. And the more accurate analogy would see the psychiatrist or psychologist as architect, able to produce more and maintain standards, because of a trusted work-force trained to operate autonomously but always with the availability of consultation for design problems or trouble-shooting.

This analogy will not be unfamiliar to any consultant in psychiatry working with a multi-disciplinary team. Its operation frees the consultant to consult for more people, for research and for planning. It may

even, for the occasional professor of psychiatry, allow time for a humorous, if misleading excursion into print.

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DEAR SIR,

Professor Goldberg's rejoinder (*Journal*, February 1978, **132**, 206) to Miss Skellern (*Journal*, February 1978, **132**, 205) adds confusion to the high-flown style and muddled thinking of his original review (*Journal*, September 1977, **131**, 320).

Dr Marks and his colleagues have demonstrated that nurses can be trained to provide behavioural psychotherapy which is as effective as that provided by psychologists and psychiatrists. Professor Goldberg seems concerned that this finding may upset established professional roles and relationships and that, despite the research results, nurse therapists may not be able to cope when treatment becomes difficult or hazardous. (I hope I have followed the lorry driver/pilot/cuckoo/bad weather/aerodynamics sequence correctly.)

It is as though Professor Goldberg was an American Professor of Obstetrics faced with research results which showed that nurses could be trained to conduct normal deliveries as safely as obstetricians. 'Good heavens', he would say, 'that's very interesting, but to whom will these new-fangled "midwives" be responsible.' He would, no doubt, add 'Whatever the research shows, I wouldn't let one near my wife.'

Dr Marks' originality has been to test his ideas concerning the potential of nurses as therapists *before* advocating a new professional role. Others can now use the data he has provided to decide whether and how such a role should be established. Professor Goldberg's response indicates how unlikely it is that the professions concerned will exhibit reason and clear thinking in reaching this decision.

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