

The **Association of Professions for the Mentally Handicapped** is holding its Eighth Annual Congress from 29 July to 1 August 1981 at Christ Church College, Canterbury. Information: James Ross (APMH Congress), 19 Page Heath Lane, Bickley, Kent BR1 2ED.

The **Institute of Family Therapy** is holding a workshop on 16 and 17 July 1981 on the topic of 'Developing Circularity and Neutrality in Family Therapy'. Information: Course Secretary, Institute of Family Therapy, 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1 (enclosing an s.a.e.).

A two-day workshop on **basic committee and management skills for senior trainees in psychiatry** will be held at the Institute of Psychiatry on 25 and 26 June 1981. The programme covers skills related to effective communication, interdisciplinary teamwork, basics of committee practice and the structure of Health Service administration. The workshop is sponsored by the British Postgraduate Medical Federation and is approved for study leave and expenses. Course fee £25. Information: Dr Helena Waters, Institute of Psychiatry, De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF and Dr Peter Hill, St George's Hospital, London SW17.

The **Institute of Group Analysis** will be holding a series of courses during 1981 and 1982. A general course in group work will run from October 1981 to June 1982; supervision seminars in clinical work and seminars on counselling and psychotherapy with offenders will run from October 1981; and a workshop on Analytic Psychodrama will take place on 4 and 5 July 1981. Information: Course Secretary, Institute of Group Analysis, 1 Bickenhall Mansions, Bickenhall Street, London W1H 3LF.

The **Epilepsy International Congress** will be held in Kyoto, Japan from 17 to 21 September 1981 at the Kyoto International Conference Hall. Information: Secretariat, c/o International Conference Organizers, Inc., 103 Crescent Plaza, 4-6 Minami-Aoyama 2-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107 Japan.

An experimental conference (residential) on inter-group dynamics and a therapeutic community process will be run by the **Association of Therapeutic Communities in conjunction with the North East London Polytechnic** from 28 June to 3 July 1981 at the Anglian Regional Management Centre, Chelmsford. Information: Thelma Wilson, NELP, Livingston House, Livingston Road, Stratford, London E15.

Correspondence

MRCPsych. Examination—A consumer survey

DEAR SIR

I was surprised to note the strong disapproval of the presence of examiners during the interview of patients by trainees in psychiatry (*Bulletin*, February, 1981). I wish to bring to the notice of the trainees that this system works very well in Canadian Fellowship Examinations in Psychiatry, (FRCP). I had the opportunity to talk to a few candidates who passed the examination and others who failed the examination, but they did not have any criticism of the system.

I think if one is to look at the advantages and disadvantages of the presence of the examiners during the interview, one can summarize them in the following way.

The advantages are: (i) If a patient happens to be very uncooperative or uncommunicative, the examiners will have first hand knowledge of the difficulties of the candidate, which will certainly help the candidate; (ii) Candidates will tend to interview the case more systematically and will not miss any important points in history or mental state examinations; (iii) Candidates will get more guidance from their clinical tutor and consultants on techniques of interviewing during their preparation for examinations. This part of the training will help the candidates in passing the examinations as well as in practice of psychiatry in future.

There are no disadvantages as such, but some people say that one should develop one's own technique of interviewing

a case, and this should not have much relevance as far as examination results are concerned. I personally think that this argument is not a very strong one against the presence of examiners during interviews. If the technique is good, why can it not be used in the presence of examiners?

V. KUMAR

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The Presidential election

DEAR SIR

As two junior psychiatrists invited to take part in the Presidential election we would have been helped by a statement of intent from the candidates as to their plans for the College. The careers described seemed equally distinguished to the inexperienced eye and so provided us with little ground for discrimination.

R. MELLER

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[Publication of candidates' statements of intent is a feature of the election of senior office-bearers in the American Psychiatric Association. Views of College members on the letter from Drs Meller and Carnwath would be welcomed—Eds]