

registrars) are sent feedback forms on their last placement. At two yearly intervals these forms are collated to provide reports on individual posts which are sent to the representative consultants for comment. The final report is then presented, through our representatives, to the rotation training committee for comment and action – if appropriate. On the last occasion we have produced a summary report detailing how the rotation as a whole is succeeding in the provision of high quality training. The latest report reveals very high levels of trainee satisfaction but, like the Liverpool scheme, few posts completely fulfil College recommendations. During the time of our audit there has been a steady improvement in the quality of training in spite of the problems caused by NHS changes and training reorganisations (Davies & Junaid, 1992).

The authors' paper is to be welcomed, but as a contribution to the long and continuing tradition of active trainee participation in psychiatric training rather than a new development.

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Dental psychiatry – False teeth and Alzheimer's disease

DEAR SIRS

I write with reference to the above paper (Burns *et al*, 1992) which turned out to be a hoax.

For a number of years a medical research team from the departments of Chemistry, Pathology and Neurology at the University of Kentucky has been investigating Alzheimer's Disease (AD) (Ehmann *et al*, 1986, 1987) using neutron activation. The team determined quantities of 18 elements in AD brains and age-matched controls and found the most consistent alterations of the largest magnitudes were elevations of mercury and bromine (Wenstrup *et al*, 1990). They considered mercury to be the most important of the imbalances observed and that the largest trace element imbalance ever found was the elevation of Hg in the nucleus basalis of Meynert

(nbM) of AD patients compared to controls (39.3 v. 8.9 ng/g, fresh weight basis). The nbM is the major cholinergic projection to the cerebral cortex and is severely degenerated in AD victims.

The author discussed several mechanisms by which the imbalance of mercury might alter the brain in AD victims. They noted potential sources as diet and dental amalgam. But the World Health Organisation (1991) measured the average daily intake of mercury toxins and their source, finding that at best dental amalgam produced as much as all other sources put together, and at worst could be six times greater. Denture wearers of course, would no longer be exposed on a daily basis to mercury vapour from dental amalgam.

So in the long run the Levy, Burns *et al* hoax may do more for AD sufferers than all the worthy quartet's years of research. Their final sentence, "It may be that future research into AD should be directed more towards the mouth than the brain" (Burns *et al*, 1992) may turn out to be prophetic.

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Psychiatric cartoons

DEAR SIRS

The Appeals Committee of the College is trying to raise money for various good causes such as the Defeat Depression Campaign.

As a member of the committee I am currently working on the production of a book of cartoons which have psychiatrists or psychiatry as their main subject. To this end I am collecting cartoons from newspapers and other publications and writing to the relevant editors seeking permission to use them in a volume which might be sold to the general public to raise money for the Appeals Committee. Sensitive editing will clearly be needed to exclude material which is in poor taste, the aim being in general to

present cartoons which show how as a profession we are able to take a joke against ourselves.

Could members consider sending me their own favourite cartoons gleaned from the media? It would be most helpful if dates and sources could be included to help in seeking copyright permission.

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SR posts and publications

DEAR SIRS

As a (first rate) post-membership registrar in an intensely busy post I have little enough time to put together an SR application let alone 'publish' for it. Hence this letter. Many thanks.

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European Association for the History of Psychiatry

The European Association for the History of Psychiatry is holding its triennial conference from 17 to 20 August 1993 at Friends House, 173–177 Euston Road, London NW1. Plenary sessions will be held on the historiography of psychiatry and the epistemology of psychiatry. There will be parallel sessions and workshops on specific aspects of the history of psychiatry in its widest sense: therapeutics, forensic psychiatry, the asylum, psychoanalysis, psychiatry

and religion, diagnostics, feminism and psychiatry, etc. Visits have been arranged to the Freud Museum and the Bethlem Museum and Archives. Films on the history of psychiatry will be shown. The registration fee is £70. Daily rates are available.

Please write for a copy of the programme and a registration form to Frieda Houser, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE.

A conference **Community Treatment of Personality Disorder—Creative Solutions** will be held on 24 September 1993 at the National Water Sports Centre, Nottingham. Further information: The

Conference Organiser, c/o Hostels Liaison Group, 23 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3FB (telephone 0602 473404; fax 0602 859551).