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.

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

Walsgrave Hospital
Walsgrave
Coventry CV2 2DX

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
T. C. M. Carnwath

Hartcliffe Health Centre
Bristol BS13 0JP

[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]