

Mentally abnormal offenders

The Special Hospitals

Following the case of Ronald Sailes (who committed a murder while on prolonged leave from Broadmoor), Mr Jenkin on 28 January announced new arrangements for leave from all the Special Hospitals. (The Circular setting out these arrangements was reviewed in the June issue of the *Bulletin*, page 115.)

Questions continue to be asked about the transfer of patients to other hospitals. The total of patients on the transfer list is now 213. Of 69 Rampton patients on the list in July 1980, 11 had been transferred by February 1981. The case of a man transferred from prison to Rampton and almost at once recommended for discharge as not being mentally disordered was mentioned on 11 April.

On 26 January Mr van Straubenzee initiated an Adjournment Debate, defending the staff of Broadmoor against the accusations of brutality made by MIND in December 1979, particularly in relation to the use of unmodified ECT. As before, he accused MIND's informants, as well as some of that body's permanent officials, of being politically motivated. Both he and Sir George Young, replying for the Department, referred to the College's views on the subject, and Sir George quoted the College's decision to review its Guidelines on ECT when the results of the current research project were available. Both the MP and the Minister paid tribute to the voluntary workers within the MIND organization, but Sir George agreed that there was cause for concern over the way comments were made 'on the principle that an allegation must be true unless the staff can prove that it is not'.

'Industrial action' by Rampton staff (following the appearance of one of them in court) was (in April) preventing visits by patients' relatives.

Prisons

More mentally abnormal prisoners are being transferred to hospitals than in previous years, but at the end of 1980 there were still 324 prisoners who ought to be in hospital.

On 23 February Lord Avebury asked two questions about the use of psychotropic drugs in prisons, but the answer

referred him to Appendix 6 of the last Report of the Prison Department.

Secure units

It was stated that interim, and later permanent secure units were to be established at Bethlem and at Cane Hill. There are now four (presumably permanent) units under construction and two more will be started before the end of the year.

Mental handicap

A Green Paper is expected to be issued on means of facilitating the transfer of patients from hospital to local authority care, and later this year legislation will be introduced on the provision of special education for those over 16.

At the end of 1979 there were 2,839 mentally handicapped children in hospital and 1,856 in residential homes, but the number being cared for by their own families is not known.

Lord Renton, on 20 January, raised the question of charges made by local authorities for attendance at training centres. He was told that this was entirely a matter for the discretion of the authority—common guidelines are being considered.

Addiction and alcoholism

There are now 97 beds in NHS hospitals specifically allocated to drug addiction, and 145 similarly allocated to the treatment of alcoholism. The cost to the NHS of alcohol-related diseases is estimated as between £50 million and £69 million at 1979 prices.

An experimental 'wet' (overnight) shelter is being established in Birmingham.

Treatment

Sporadic sniping at psychosurgery continues, without result.

Prescriptions for diazepam and chlordiazepoxide number respectively 9 million and 2½ million each year, but the number diminished slightly between 1978 and 1979.

ALEXANDER WALK

Forthcoming Events

The 4th annual conference on **Alcohol, Drugs and Psychiatry** is to be held in Birmingham on 2 and 3 October 1981. Information: Dr M. I. Akhter, Regional Drug Addiction and Alcoholism Treatment Unit, All Saints' Hospital, Lodge Road, Birmingham B18 5SD.

The **Institute of Family Therapy (London)** will be holding various courses beginning in October 1981: Introductory Course in Family and Marital Therapy; Continuation

Course in Family and Marital Therapy; **Observation Seminars of Family Work**; Clinical workshops and seminars for social workers. Information: Course Secretary, Institute of Family Therapy (London), 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1, enclosing an s.a.e.

21st 'Current Themes in Psychiatry' Conference will be held at Leeds Castle, Maidstone, Kent from 19 to 25 September 1981. Information and application: Mrs. M. Browne, Course Secretary, Keats House, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT.

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References

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