

develop more comprehensive programmes of management. This could include more frequent attendances each week, improved transport to allow the period of attendance each day to be extended, weekend openings, night-sitter services at home, the use of some of the more active methods of behavioural intervention and the dispersal of day hospitals within the community they serve rather than their concentration within the grounds of psychiatric or other hospitals.

J. G. GREENE
G. C. TIMBURY

*Gartnavel Royal Hospital,
Glasgow G12 0XH*

TABLE
Admission and discharge data for organic patients 1972-77

Admission (210)		Discharge (155)	
<i>From</i>		<i>To</i>	
Home—no previous contact	73	Home	12
Home—previous contact	10	Long-stay ward	75
Hospital ward	13	Other hospital	6
Residential care	4	Residential care	7
<i>Primary reason</i>		<i>Primary reason</i>	
Family unable to cope	52	Deterioration	77
Patient unable to cope	21	Improvement	4
Other	27	Other	19

All percentages.

EPILEPTIC HOMICIDE

DEAR SIR,

I read with interest the case report by Dr John Gunn about a man who appears to have killed his wife during an epileptic fit, although the diagnosis was not clear at the time of his trial and did not feature in his defence. However, I am a little surprised that Dr Gunn has not cited my own paper describing a similar case (Brewer, 1971). It is of interest not merely because, as Dr Gunn says, homicide during an epileptic seizure is rare, but because accurate diagnosis enabled a defence of insanity due to temporal lobe epilepsy to be mounted with reasonable confidence.

The patient in my case had one transient episode of strange behaviour a few months before the homicide but was not investigated at the time. The pre-trial EEG findings were abnormal but, as is often the case with temporal lobe epilepsy, not diagnostic. Fortunately, however, he had an air-encephalogram before the trial which demonstrated atrophy of the left temporal lobe. It was the X-ray findings which enabled a defence of temporal lobe epilepsy to be

sustained in the face of determined opposition from the Crown.

The advent of computerized tomography means that a really thorough pre-trial neuropsychiatric investigation, covering psychometry, EEG, and X-ray studies as well as clinical examination, can now be considered as much more of a routine than hitherto.

I am writing this letter not merely to draw attention to the existence of another well-documented case of epileptic homicide but to point out, as I have done previously (Brewer, 1974), that adequate pre-trial investigation in any case where there is a suspicion of brain disease may produce evidence of the utmost importance for the outcome of the trial and for the subsequent management of the patient. In the context of temporal lobe epilepsy, one may note that 70 per cent of the series studied by Slater and Beard (1973) had temporal lobe atrophy. In the fairly recent past, people have been executed for murder, only for significant brain disease to be discovered at post mortem which could have been detected before the trial if the appropriate tests had been done (Bourke and Sonenberg, 1969).

COLIN BREWER

*Department of Psychiatry,
Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
Birmingham B15 2TH*

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BUTTERFLY MAN

DEAR SIR,

I would appreciate the opportunity to reply to Dr Hugh Freeman's review of my recent book, *Butterfly Man: Madness, Degradation and Redemption* (Hutchinson, 1977) in your May 1978 issue (**132**, 523).

This book attempts to demonstrate the problems that arise from reliance on physical methods of treatment in psychiatry and to show that in many cases the interpersonal approach, whether through the therapeutic milieu or psychotherapy, may be effective and have less drawbacks.

Dr Freeman alleges that my present work stems mainly from the theories of Dr R. D. Laing. This is not the case. Although I hold Dr Laing in respect. I have not worked with him for many years. My current work, particularly with the Arbours Association, which sponsors a Crisis Centre and residential communities, derives from many sources including Dr Maxwell Jones and his colleagues on therapeutic communities, Drs Gerald Caplan, Donald Langsley, R. D. Scott and their colleagues on crisis intervention and current thinking on the psychoanalytic treatment of the borderline and psychotic patient.

That schizophrenic patients respond to the unconscious mental processes of their therapists, and especially to their interest and enthusiasm, is indeed well known and has been described by psychoanalysts including Drs John Rosen and Harold Searles.

I am afraid that Dr Freeman has misstated my analysis of the work of the Arbours Crisis Centre. Over the four-year period, January 1973 to February 1977, almost 150 people were resident at the Centre. Many hundreds more were helped by telephone interventions (no visit required) or through individual and family meetings held at their homes or at the Centre.

JOSEPH H. BERKE

29 Oval Road,
London NW1 7EA

NURSE THERAPISTS

DEAR SIR,

With growing concern I have read the correspondence in your columns about the training of nurse-therapists. As one of the few psychiatric nurses currently engaged in full-time clinical research in psychiatric nursing, I find it sad that the very important issue of what roles psychiatric nurses currently have, and what they ought, in future, to have, has been obscured by this correspondence. Several points ought to be made.

Whilst Professor Goldberg's review (*Journal*, September 1977, 131, 320) of Dr Mark's research used an analogy which was, perhaps, a little unfortunate, in comparing psychiatric nurses with lorry drivers, there is no doubt that nurses do have their own role within the health system. If other members of the team such as psychiatrists and psychologists see psychiatric nurses merely as a convenient source of extra personnel to be used to supplement the gaps in their services then this is also unfortunate, since it suggests that psychiatric nurses currently have nothing in particular to do, unless directed by other professionals.

It is also sad that the term 'nurse-therapist' has become almost exclusively attached to those who have

completed Dr Mark's behaviourally oriented course. Many psychiatric nurses would consider themselves therapists, but would make their therapeutic interventions from other models of psychiatry.

Important, too, are developments in nursing. The Department of Nursing here is committed to the development of planned and systematic nursing care for all patients. Developing this approach to nursing demands a high level of knowledge in the behavioural and biological sciences. If psychiatric nurses are to provide this type of care for patients, then they are likely to find their time is fully occupied.

One would hope that psychiatric nurses will have the courage to develop their own, highly important, professional role and to let psychiatrists and psychologists find their assistants from other sources. In this way the most important member of the team—the patient—will be assured of a high standard of service from all professionals in the health care team.

HELEN MACILWAINE

University of Manchester,
Department of Nursing,
Stopford Building,
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PT

This correspondence is now closed.—Editor.

WARD ROUNDS

DEAR SIR,

As suggested by Dr Baxter in the May 1978 issue of the *Journal* (132, 526) I would like to report a method for reviewing and meeting patients which has been worked out by my unit in a District General Hospital setting. The team as a whole reviews the case of each patient and then, as a group, we meet with the patients concerned sharing with them any suggestions and decisions of immediate concern to them such as changes in medication or weekend leave, as well as matters of deeper significance if appropriate. This meeting often leads on to become a community meeting with its wider implications and is naturally followed by a feedback when the staff meet together without the patients. We may then revise earlier decisions in the light of discussion at the meeting with patients. The patients do of course, have other opportunities for meeting both medical and non-medical members of staff in individual or group sessions.

It is my impression that our format for a ward round allows a multi-disciplinary approach to patient management with the participation of patients, but it should be seen in the context in which it occurs, namely, a setting based on therapeutic community principles. Although our format has obvious disadvantages we feel that it offers a better