models can successfully address issues of hidden confounding in the absence of appropriate design. Although enthusiasts in the social and behavioural sciences have used structural equation models and 'causal models' interchangeably for many years, their naïvety has frequently brought structural equation modelling into disrepute. Pearl's book covers structural modelling in the appropriate way, but many readers of this journal will find it a bit heavy going. We do indeed plan to publish on these issues in much greater detail in the near future.

Declaration of interest

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The most undeserving poor?

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, James Purnell, proposes removing payment of benefits from unemployed persons with addiction to crack cocaine and heroin.[1,2] The proposed Green Paper[3] sets a remarkable precedent in terms of official, inter-agency response to that common mental disorder described as 'drug addiction'. It focuses on benefits (to an estimated 267 000 individuals in England alone) for those 'dependent on drugs' or 'problematic drug users'.[4] Little attempt is made to distinguish between degrees of dependence or recreational use. The Green Paper claims that 'this is around three-quarters' of all the people who are 'dependent on these drugs'.[3]

It states 'we believe that drug misuse is a serious cause of worklessness and that individuals have a responsibility to declare it and take steps to overcome it' (section 2.40). At present only 0.05% of people on jobseekers allowance declare an addiction.[3]

All applicants will be required 'to declare whether they are addicted to heroin or crack cocaine' (section 2.39) with investigations for fraud against those who 'mislead' and they will 'be required to enter treatment' (section 2.41–2.43). Proposals include new powers to force agencies such as 'drug workers' (section 2.38) to disclose clinical information. It seems inevitable that at least forensic and prison doctors will have to 'share information', and National Health Service psychiatrists will become complicit in informing job centres as part of multidisciplinary teams.

Given the known morbidity of addiction,[5] we know of no other psychiatric disorder that excludes citizens from access to statutory services!

For practising clinicians, the proposed legislation strikes at the core of the doctor–patient relationship, destroying medical confidentiality and grossly interfering in treatment. Therapy is often episodic and incremental but in future doctors will hesitate to end an episode of failing treatment for fear of depriving their patients of food and sustenance. How will clinicians establish working relationships with their patients while simultaneously policing the state benefit system? Politicians, high on prejudice, are driving a coach and horses through the subtle art of treatment. Where is the dissenting outcry from the profession and the Royal College of Psychiatrists? If doctors do not speak up for their most vulnerable patients, who will?

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Wake-up call for British psychiatry: responses

The paper by Craddock *et al*[1] and the subsequent eLetters illustrate the variety of opinions that attracted me to psychiatry. I work in a multi-agency service and our assessments and interventions can be carried out by professionals in Mind, in social services and in the National Health Service (NHS). In our service we share responsibilities. This allows me (a consultant psychiatrist) to pursue a resurgent interest in psychopharmacology, treatment adherence and the harm caused by side-effects of medication. Although I appreciate the academic endeavours in biomedical science, I believe it is very important to contextualise them for non-academics. Randomised controlled trials don't speak to clinicians as well as naturalistic studies. I have noticed that some of my psychiatric colleagues (and myself at times) shy away from precise diagnosis, acutely aware of how diagnoses are deliberately used to stigmatise people by individuals outside mental health services (as well as within). This is happening at a time when case definitions are becoming important to health service managers. Perhaps some psychiatrists are uncomfortable in their traditional territory. However, if psychiatrists step back too far, then others will move in. I expect that senior managers, rather than other clinicians or service users, are likely to move into the spaces that we vacate. Psychiatrists should not support the replacement of 'doctor knows best' with 'manager knows best'. New Ways of Working may end up doing exactly that. Instead of being a shot in the arm, it may be a shot in the foot. Four trusts in the north of England are already constructing their own diagnostic systems to use alongside or instead of existing diagnostic schemes as a currency for payment by results. Assigning patients to pseudo-diagnostic 'care clusters' could be something all staff do, not just the doctors. If psychiatrists step back from diagnosis, then diagnosis may change from a clinical concept with an associated evidence base, to a financial planning tool. There are other drivers of change too. In the prevalent atmosphere of anxiety and blame, risk assessment, not diagnosis, is now arguably the main gateway into acute mental health services. This means that some very ill people may have to wait for treatment, while people who seem to be at acute risk are attended to first.

Times change and if psychiatrists of any persuasion want to retain some influence they have to put up, not shut up; so well done for making the biomedical case. Biomedical psychiatry complements psychosocial psychiatry and is uniquely part of

medical doctors' expertise. The Royal College of Psychiatrists should take this issue up with its members.

1 Craddock N, Antebi D, Attenburrow M-J, Bailey A, Carson A, Cowen P, Craddock B, Eagles J, Ebmeier K, Farmer A, Fazel S, Ferrier N, Geddes J, Goodwin G, Harrison P, Hawton K, Hunter S, Jacoby R, Jones I, Keedwell P, Kerr M, Mackin P, McGuffin P, MacIntyre DJ, McConville P, Mountain D, O'Donovan MC, Owen MJ, Oyebode F, Phillips M, Price J, Shah P, Smith DJ, Walters J, Woodruff P, Young A, Zammit S. Wake-up call for British psychiatry. *Br J Psychiatry* 2008; **193**: 6–9.

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Craddock *et al*'s 'Wake up call for British Psychiatry'[1] is a timely reminder of the need for our profession to reassert its essential qualities, particularly in view of the current low recruitment rate into psychiatry from UK graduates. The Psychiatric Trainees' Committee (PTC) agrees with the observation that the medical component of psychiatry is being devalued. Indeed, this is apparent in many of the recent changes associated with psychiatric training.

The European Working Time Directive has in part contributed to reduced exposure to emergency psychiatry. This has resulted in a reduction in the recognition and management of biomedical aspects which are often key in acute psychiatric presentations. This has been exacerbated by financially stretched trusts gradually reducing the out-of-hours contribution from trainee psychiatrists in favour of cheaper alternatives.

New Ways of Working remains contentious. Specific consideration is required to ensure that postgraduate training adapts both in substance and in delivery to ensure that future psychiatrists have the necessary skills to fulfil the changing role of a consultant. Trainees are increasingly anxious that the rapid evolution of New Ways of Working has become a driver for preventing essential continued expansion in the numbers of consultant psychiatrists. Indeed, there is a growing political atmosphere suggesting that consultants will be needed less abundantly than at present.[2] The PTC firmly believes that the introduction of a sub-consultant grade will diminish the end-point of training, further devalue the profession and not serve the needs of patients.

These issues, alongside the changes resulting from Modernising Medical Careers and the significant stresses of the Medical Training Application Service, are contributing to a cohort of trainees who perceive that they are not in a valued profession.

We believe that the new competency-based framework of psychiatric training, if robustly quality-assured, offers a solid opportunity to reassert the training needs of future psychiatrists, especially in regard to their unique medical expertise in the assessment and treatment of mental disorders. However, the current changes within mental health services threaten to undervalue our role as medical specialists. This is likely to further alienate medical undergraduates and compound the current recruitment crisis.

Urgent work needs to be done by our profession to re-engage with both the government and the public as a whole to ensure that the essential contribution psychiatrists make in providing a high-quality mental health service to our patients is not further devalued.

1 Craddock N, Antebi D, Attenburrow M-J, Bailey A, Carson A, Cowen P, Craddock B, Eagles J, Ebmeier K, Farmer A, Fazel S, Ferrier N, Geddes J, Goodwin G, Harrison P, Hawton K, Hunter S, Jacoby R, Jones I, Keedwell P, Kerr M, Mackin P, McGuffin P, MacIntyre DJ, McConville P, Mountain D, O'Donovan MC, Owen MJ, Oyebode F, Phillips M, Price J, Shah P, Smith DJ, Walters J, Woodruff P, Young A, Zammit S. Wake-up call for British psychiatry. *Br J Psychiatry* 2008; **193**: 6–9.

2 NHS Employers. The future of the medical workforce (http://www.nhsemployers.org/workforce/workforce-2193.cfm). NHS Employers, 2007.

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One cheer at least for Craddock *et al*'s[1] polemic. Critical of the de-medicalisation and role-diffusion which they see as characterising contemporary British psychiatry, they argue that those with severe mental illnesses are best served by an initial consultation with a professional with the diagnostic skills of the consultant psychiatrist. Without such an intervention, they claim, the patient is likely to be psychopharmacologically disadvantaged, possible physical disorders may be overlooked and scientific advances not brought to bear on their illness.

Nevertheless a neutral observer might be tempted to see their 'wake-up call' as a tendentious attempt to regain hegemony by the psychiatric establishment. Their *ad hominem* 'thought experiment' – inviting readers to ask themselves whether they would be happy for 'a member of their family' to be cared for under the 'distributed responsibility' model – seems unworthy of such illustrious academics, a hostage to the possibility that many will take the contrary view. The two absent cheers are for the missing psychosocial components of Mayer's bio-psychosocial triad, first proposed a century ago, midway between Reil[2] and Craddock *et al*. Indeed, that lack exemplifies the narrowness of vision which has arguably led to the very crisis which they bemoan. Nowhere do the authors consider the social forces driving de-professionalisation: the need to contain burgeoning healthcare budgets; flattening of social hierarchies, with leadership to be earned rather than role-bestowed; and technology-driven fragmentation of care.

Understanding these processes, and knowing how to work productively with the rivalries and distortions they create, is as essential to the psychiatrist's repertoire as the latest psychopharmacology update. Nor are these issues confined to psychiatry, not excluding the cardiology model so dear to their hearts. The good general physician who takes an overview of a whole patient, including psychological aspects, and is not merely a technical expert in the minutiae of a malfunctioning organ, is as rare a species as the putative 'superlative' psychiatrist.

Craddock *et al*'s view of the science relevant to psychiatry is similarly limited, confining itself to molecular biology and neuroscience. There is no mention of recent advances in developmental psychopathology[3] which illuminate the psychological deficits of psychiatric illness, and the interpersonal skills needed by therapists of ameliorate them, or of psychotherapy process–outcome research which is beginning to tell us which kinds of therapy work best for which kinds of condition and personality. Waking up is the instant when dreams momentarily enter consciousness. Behind their grumpy growling, Craddock *et al*'s reverie sounds like regressive nostalgia for an idealised past with which it is hard not to feel sympathetic, but is devoid of plans – as opposed to wishes – for the future.

A more hopeful straw in the wind is the recent Royal Colleges of Psychiatry and General Practitioners joint document on psychological therapies.[4] This argues the case for structured training in psychosocial skills for psychiatrists and general practitioners. Craddock *et al* might consider the possibility that a psychotherapeutically informed psychiatrist – whose abilities