

## References

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## Easing the medical staffing crisis in psychiatry

Sir: Jenkins & Scott (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, April 1998, **22**, 239-241) have correctly drawn attention to the current crisis. An important factor in psychiatry is the ability of consultants to retire at

55 years of age, often reaching maximum pension at 57-58 years of age. As work in general psychiatry is currently highly stressful, most consultants choose to retire on reaching maximum pension or earlier. They then spend their time providing second opinions for the Mental Health Act Commission and attending mental health review tribunals; a worthy occupation, but not 'real' psychiatry.

However, my own experience may be of interest to consultants considering retirement. Having retired at 58 years of age I have been able to continue working five sessions per week in my own psychiatric unit and by chance found an additional part-time consultant who wanted to 'job-share'. Though for five sessions my combined earnings plus pension equal my previous salary, this is at no extra cost to the unit and between us we are carrying out all the duties of my former consultant post. Work which before seemed onerous I can now take in my stride and hope to continue to do so for some years.

Clearly, the arrangement allowing me to continue working within my own unit and even in my own catchment area required some flexibility on the part of my employing trust, but if this arrangement were widely adopted it may help to ease the shortage of consultants.

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