

However, why *did* the College (both Council and Court of Electors) change its mind and make basic psychotherapy training mandatory? Not, I think, because they were occupied with issues of 'status', or a wish to resolve half-forgotten battles from the past, but because most psychiatrists working with multi-professional teams regarded this as a *sine qua non* for good practice, and for maintaining professional self-esteem.

Certainly the somewhat precocious influence of the General Psychiatry Section, which endorsed multi-model psychiatry, was undoubtedly a major explanation as to why these formerly controversial issues caused such little dissent (or debate) when the *Guidelines for Psychotherapy Training as Part of General Professional Training* (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1993) were proposed; although influential academics correctly endeavoured to see that the psychotherapy recommendations were realistic and achievable. To that extent the most difficult decisions for the Court of Electors are yet to come, i.e. when training programmes are being revisited in two to three years time and the psychotherapy training requirements for SHOs reviewed, how will the Court respond to requirements that have not been *fully* implemented?

No doubt consultant psychotherapists and the Psychotherapy Section were appropriate advocates for these changes but the challenge for these specialist psychotherapists is equally great. Will they indeed direct their energies to the training of psychiatrists in their first years of training, and provide a menu of clinically relevant supervision sessions across the broad range of psychotherapeutic treatment?

I indeed hope, using the Holmes' metaphor, to remain a 'footsoldier' of psychiatry and certainly there is plenty of room in the trenches for a psychotherapist familiar with the rigours of trench warfare including the ability to adopt strategies to meet unexpected demands.

The *Guidelines* were of course written by a general psychiatrist (James Watson), a psychotherapist (Sandra Grant), and that notable hybrid now from North Devon whose pungent writings have as usual sparked off this less eloquent, but hopefully relevant, historical response.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS (1993) *Guidelines for Psychotherapy Training as Part of General Professional Training* (CR 27). London: RCPsych.

JOHN COX
Dean, The Royal College of Psychiatrists

Warning signs at a discharge meeting

Sir: The patient was subject to Section 117, Level 3 Care Programme Approach and the Supervision Register. There had been full agreement on the

care plan until we came to warning signs. The patient agreed that 'stopping medication' was a warning sign. That was why he was in hospital now. 'Suicidal thoughts' were also a warning sign. He was well aware that he might kill himself one day and did not object to being on the Supervision Register.

However, he strongly disagreed with 'social withdrawal', included because he had been admitted to hospital in a catatonic state. He felt he had the right to silence like anyone else and became suspicious and upset having previously been very positive about the care plan. It was agreed that social withdrawal would have to be accompanied by self neglect to qualify as a warning sign. The sheaf of relevant forms were amended and he was asked to sign them.

He wanted to know whether signing the forms meant he was making a future commitment or just a current one. Would it make a difference to him if he did not sign? We reassured him it would make no difference to his care, and he should only sign if he agreed.

Trust had evaporated, and he now decided he wanted to appeal against his inclusion on the Supervision Register. He was on the Supervision Register because he had made several serious suicide attempts in the past which always occurred without warning, when he had no psychotic symptoms and was taking medication. Only when he was well did he fully realise how much his illness had frustrated his progress through life.

The meeting, witnessed by a baffled nearest relative, was unavoidably stressful and protracted. Later I was recalled to the ward to fill in the Early Notification of Discharge Form for the general practitioner which I had forgotten. Only that night did I remember that I had also forgotten to sign the most important form of all. It was presumably designed in 1983 because it was the size of a postcard and merely required the name of the patient, the date and my signature to discharge him from Section 3.

With the advent of the Supervised Discharge Order which adds another 20 pages of documentation to the discharge procedure, I wonder whether it is the profusion of paperwork that is the warning sign for our profession – the gradual change from doctor to discredited public official continues.

PAUL WOLFSON
Oxdeas NHS Trust, Bexley Hospital, Bexley,
Kent DA5 2BW

Plasma levels of tricyclics and related antidepressants

Sir: I was interested in reading the opinion by Taylor & Duncan (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, September 1995, 19, 548–550) that "...tricyclic serum levels