



equivalent, asking members of the College to write in support of such a Group and expressing willingness to participate in its activities.

- (4) If at least 120 members reply to this notice within four months of publication, then Council shall formally approve the establishment of the Special Interest Group.

In accordance with this procedure, Council has approved a proposal for the establishment of a Special Interest Group in Social Science and Psychiatry.

Background to the proposal

The past 20 years have seen many significant advances in biological psychiatry. Less well known, but of no less importance for the future of psychiatry, are developments in our understanding of social factors in mental disorder.

Disciplines including medical sociology, medical anthropology, social psychology and health economics offer critical perspectives from which to examine psychiatric theories and scrutinise psychiatric practice. Psychiatrists need to engage in these debates and one important forum to discuss these issues would be a special interest group in social science and psychiatry.

Members are invited to write in support of this Group and express willingness to participate in its activities. Interested members should write to the Registrar care of Miss Sue Duncan at the College.

If 120 members reply to this notice within 4 months of publication, then Council shall formally approve the establishment of this Special Interest Group.

Andrew Fairbairn
Registrar

Proposal for a Special Interest Group in Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Procedure for establishing a Special Interest Group:

- (1) Any member wishing to establish a Special Interest Group shall write to the Registrar with relevant details.
- (2) The Registrar shall forward the application to Council.
- (3) If Council approves the principle of establishing such a Special Interest Group then it will direct the Registrar to place a notice in the Bulletin, or its equivalent, asking members of the College to write in support of such a Group and expressing willingness to participate in its activities.
- (4) If at least 120 members reply to this notice within four months of publication, then Council shall formally approve the establishment of the Special Interest Group.

In accordance with this procedure, Council has approved a proposal for the establishment of a Special Interest Group in Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

Background to the proposal

- Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a growing provider of health care, and mental health care, in the UK.
- Many people with mental illness use both orthodox care and CAM.
- Irrespective of whether CAM is effective, good practice suggests that psychiatrists should be familiar with the generic issues around CAM, the specific complementary interventions used by their patients, and the possibility for interactions with orthodox treatments.
- There is evidence that some complementary interventions are efficacious.
- There is a need for good research on widely-used but still untested interventions.
- In 2001 the Government responded favourably to a report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, supporting recommendations for training fellowships and research, and

recognising the role that CAM has within the NHS.

- Subsequently, the Department of Health called for a declaration of interests by universities in hosting Complementary Medicine Research Award Holders for Research Capacity Awards, resulting in 19 universities eligible to collaborate with award applicants.
- In *Tomorrow's Doctors*, the GMC recognises that the medical undergraduate curriculum should include familiarisation with complementary therapies.

A small working group has met several times, and has established links with the Foundation for Integrated Medicine. A medline search on mental health and CAM has been undertaken, and a session was held at the College's Annual Meeting in July 2003. Consideration is being given to a stand-alone conference in 2004/5.

The College's Council has endorsed a proposal to establish a Special Interest Group in this area to continue and formalise this initiative.

The Special Interest Group will aim to meet regularly to consider key issues of relevance to the College and to organise seminars and conferences, to stimulate research and good practice, and to disseminate evaluation of complementary and alternative approaches in mental health. The Special Interest Group will also establish links with other interested parties including other Royal Colleges and professional associations.

Members are invited to write in support of this Group and express willingness to participate in its activities. Interested members should write to the Registrar, care of Miss Sue Duncan at the College.

If 120 members reply to this notice within 4 months of publication, then Council shall formally approve the establishment of this Special Interest Group.

Andrew Fairbairn
Registrar