

### *An open letter to the President*

Dear Dr Birley

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Autumn Quarterly Meeting includes Psychiatry in the Private Sector, a session which seems out of place in a scientific meeting.

This is not simply a question of the merits or otherwise of private sector psychiatric practice. Also, it is clear that private practice is a subject which could be discussed in an objective and balanced manner. The point is whether or not this particular session should be given by implication academic status equivalent to the other session topics, such as psychiatric genetics

or community care, since the individual speakers are all representatives or employees of private health firms and include some whose job it is to promote private practice.

The decision to include this session risks lowering the academic standing of the meeting as a whole and bringing the Royal College into disrepute. The College would be better to follow-up its previous support for an improved NHS, the only option for the vast majority of our patients.

Yours sincerely

Louis Appleby  
Glyn Lewis  
R. H. Cawley  
Isaac Marks  
Pamela Taylor  
Raymond Levy  
Klaus Bergmann  
Nick Temple  
Brian Toone  
Stephen Wolkind  
Eileen Joyce  
Michael Gill  
E. Guinness  
Michael Farrell  
V. L. Nimgaonkar  
Deborah Chee  
L. Mynors-Wallis  
Peter Jones  
Penny Thompson  
Rachel Brown  
H. Ring

Claire Gerada  
Jenny Bearn  
S. G. Potts  
B. C. Beats  
Lyn Pilowsky  
Judith Jackson  
G. F. Searle  
Keith Lloyd  
Helena Fox  
Parimela Moodley  
Tony Maden  
S. W. Lewis  
M. W. Orrell  
D. Murphy  
W. J. Levy  
Brian Green  
Alex Buchanan  
Marian J. Perkins  
Peter Misch  
Gillian Mezey  
M. Murphy

Anthony David  
Robert Kerwin  
Shirine Pezeshgi  
M. Abas  
P. Silverstone  
J. H. Stone  
G. O.'Sullivan  
R. Araya  
R. Ball  
E. Palazidou  
Jane Milton  
Anthony J. Pelosi  
Janet Carrick  
Dinesh Bhugra  
Chris Hollis  
Mark Berelowitz  
N. R. Fisher  
Deborah Brooke  
Charles Hindler  
Malcolm Battersby  
Abigail Seltzer

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### *Dr Birley replies*

Dear Dr Appleby

Thank you for the letter of 17 October from yourself and your colleagues.

Private care is a legitimate business and makes a contribution to the care of our citizens. The extent of this contribution, and the effect which this has on the National Health Service is, of course, a matter of debate. As to the actual content and standard of the session, I feel that you are prejudging the occasion. It

is surely better for the speakers to be drawn from private care when they are describing its activities. The audience, which I hope will contain a number of your fellow signatories, will be able to ask questions and discuss their particular concerns.

Yours sincerely

J. L. T. Birley

*President*

*Royal College of Psychiatrists*