

### *Effects of the 1983 Mental Health Act*

DEAR SIRS

A change in type and reduction in total number of compulsory admission orders as a result of the new Mental Health legislation has been reported in Southampton by Winterson and Barraclough.<sup>1</sup> We therefore examined the practices in our own hospital.

Barrow is a traditional mental hospital with 130 beds for acute adult admissions situated in the country close to Bristol and serves a third of the city and adjacent countryside. Admissions number about 1200 annually. Avon Social Services, which covers Barrow Hospital catchment, reviewed the local arrangements for compulsory orders some years before 1983, ensuring an adequate service where necessary. Use of emergency orders was considered unnecessary and avoided. Perhaps as a result, the pattern of use barely changed on introduction of the new Mental Health Act legislation in 1983.

The discrepancy between our steady figures and the change in practice found by Winterson and Barraclough is

accounted for largely by the use of three day emergency orders in Southampton. Each has to be followed by a 28 day or six month order, resulting in two sections where one would do. In remote rural areas emergency orders are occasionally necessary when an approved doctor is not available. This is not true of either area here. (See Table).

Contrary to the conclusion reached by Winterson and Barraclough, we suggest that the effect of the 1983 legislation may have been to bring variations in procedure more into line with those who had already adopted desirable practices.

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#### REFERENCE

- <sup>1</sup>WINTERSON, M. J. & BARRACLOUGH, B. M. (1985) Effects of 1983 Mental Health Act. *The Lancet*, ii, 1426.

*Impact of 1983 Mental Health legislation on admissions under section*

Section*	<i>Barrow Hospital</i>		<i>Royal South Hants Hospital</i>	
	1981-83	1983-85	1981-83	1983-85
28 day: 2 (25)	162 (68%)	188 (70%)	123 (38%)	171 (66%)
6 month: 3 (26)	67 (28%)	69 (26%)	125 (39%)	43 (17%)
Emergency: 4 (29)	6 (3%)	1 (1%)	67 (21%)	33 (13%)
Other	2	10	12	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>258</b>
% of admissions	10.3%	9.7%	16.4%	12.2%

\*Sections of 1959 Mental Health Act in parentheses.  
Years in this table run 1 October to 30 September.

### *Curt P. Richter Prize in Psychoneuroendocrinology*

The International Society of Psychoneuroendocrinology (ISPNE) invites submission of manuscripts for the Curt P. Richter Prize 1988. The award includes an honorarium of \$1,000 (sponsored by Pergamon Press) and a travel grant of up to \$1,000 (offered by the Society) to the 19th International Congress of the ISPNE in Groningen, The Netherlands, 22-26 August 1988, where the prize will be awarded. The winning paper will automatically be considered for publication in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology*.

*The deadline for submission is 31 January 1988. All submissions will be screened by a committee of established psychoneuroendocrinologists. For detailed information, before submission of manuscript, please contact the Secretary of the ISPNE: Gerhard Langer, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, University of Vienna, Währinger Gürtel 18-20, A-1090 Vienna, Austria.*