



who are mentally disturbed, and the safety of CS spray to all concerned must be compared with that of the alternatives, such as physical restraint or use of batons, which themselves involve an element of risk”.

St John's Wort

On 1 March 2000 the Department of Health issued a press release *New Advice on St John's Wort* (<http://213.38.88.195/coi/coipress.nsf>) giving advice on taking St John's Wort with other medication. A debate, raised by Earl Baldwin, also took place in the House of Lords on this issue. Lord Hunt of King's Heath, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, told the House that the Medicines Control Agency had informed him that there had been no successful licence application for St John's Wort.

Vulnerable adults

On 20 March 2000 the Health Minister, John Hutton, announced that the Government was going to take action to protect vulnerable adults. Following a consultation period, the Department of Health published guidance entitled *No Secrets*, which came into effect immediately. This details how agencies should work together to protect those at risk and to make sure procedures are in place to deal with incidents of abuse. The document (Department of Health, 2000) is available at www.doh.gov.uk/scg/nosecrets.

New arrangements to safeguard incapacitated people's finances in England and Wales

Part vii of the Mental Health Act 1983 lays down arrangements for persons who cannot manage their own affairs and these have been the responsibility of the Mental Health Sector of the Public Trustee's Office. The Lord Chancellor announced that, following a quinquennial review, new arrangements will be introduced. These are detailed in *Making Changes – the Future of the Public Trust Office* at www.publictrust.gov.uk. The Lord Chancellor will retain ministerial responsibility and expects a better quality of service to follow. Meanwhile he welcomes comments on what is proposed. He also repeated the commitment to legislate on the policy proposals in *Making Decisions* (Great Britain Lord

Chancellor's Department, 1999) “when parliamentary time allows”.

We think these issues will be of interest to you and would welcome feedback, positive or negative, particularly as to whether the topics we select are the ones of most interest. For more information on any of the above please contact Dr Roger Freeman, Chair of the College's Parliamentary Liaison Subcommittee at: armfreeman@doctors.org.uk or Christopher Walden, Parliamentary and Policy Officer at: cwalden@rcpsych.ac.uk or tel. 020 7235 2351 (ext. 169).

CORBETT, R. (2000) *Managing Dangerous People with Severe Personality Disorder*. 1st Report (Session 1999–00). London: The Stationery Office.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (2000) *No Secrets. Guidance on Developing and Implementing Multi-Agency Policies and Procedures to Protect Vulnerable Adults from Abuse*. London: Department of Health.

GREAT BRITAIN LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT (1999) *Making Decisions: the Government's Proposals for Making Decisions on Behalf of Incapacitated Adults*. London: The Stationery Office.

Services for Younger People with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias. A Policy Paper by the Royal College of Psychiatrists Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry

Council Report CR77.
£5.00. 20 pp.

Younger people who suffer from dementia frequently fall through the net. This paper is welcomed within the College and strongly supported by the Alzheimer's Society.

An incremental approach is advocated with the appointment of two key players; at the commissioning level (health authority/primary care groups or their equivalent) a named person responsible for planning and a clinician to act as a focus for referrals, initially two consultant sessions. An old age psychiatrist is well placed to undertake the clinical role.

After these appointments have been made the rudiments of the local service is created. At all stages coordination and networking with people already involved with younger people with dementia is important while the composition and evolution of the new service will depend on existing local services and facilities.

As implementation is incremental an immediate start can be made. These early developments will be reviewed by the Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry and the

Alzheimer's Society in 2002 to provide data for a revised document.

Proposal for a Special Interest Group in Lesbian and Gay Mental Health

Procedure for establishing a special interest group

- Any member wishing to establish a Special Interest Group shall write to the Registrar with relevant details.
- The Registrar shall forward the application to Council.
- If Council approves the principle of establishing such a Special Interest Group then it will direct the Registrar to place a notice in the *Psychiatric 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
- If at least 120 members reply to this notice, then Council shall formally approve the establishment of the Special Interest Group.

In accordance with this procedure, Council has approved the establishment of a Special Interest Group in Lesbian and Gay Mental Health, to provide a focus for discussion and research and to serve as a source of expertise within the College in this area. It is also anticipated that the Special Interest Group would make an important contribution to public education. The principal issues with which the Special Interest Group would be concerned would include:

- access to mental health care;
- attitudes within the health service to homosexuality;
- the relationship between bullying and discrimination of young gay and lesbian people and suicide and deliberate self-harm;
- substance misuse among the gay and lesbian communities;
- the difficulties experienced by gay and lesbian health professionals in the work-place.

Members are invited to write in support of this Group and express willingness to participate in its activities. Interested members should write to Miss Sue Duncan at the College. So far 105 members have replied to this notice, and the Council will formally approve the establishment of this Special Interest Group if 15 more members reply.

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