

in particular, Dr. B. D. Hore of Manchester and Dr. J. S. Madden of Chester, have encouraged their doctor and dentist patients to seek our help. Twenty-nine have reached us in this way. A further 20 have joined the Group in response to direct contact with existing members. The remaining 16 have been recommended by Councils on Alcoholism, family members and non-alcoholic colleagues. The importance to us of supportive specialists in the field of alcoholism cannot be too strongly emphasized.

Sobriety is notoriously difficult to determine with accuracy. There is, however, among a group of alcoholic doctors a real sense of identity with sobriety. An alcoholic who conceals a return to drinking from family and therapist is less likely to do so among fellow alcoholics.

In the March 1983 assessment of the state of sobriety of the Group, two measurements were made. Firstly, the number who had remained sober since joining the Group was estimated. Members were only considered to have sustained sobriety if their claim was supported by the evidence of at least two other persons, one of whom being a member of the Group. Contact at the time was suspended by emigration, etc. for four members. Of the remaining 56, 40 were considered to be sober since joining the Group, the mean duration of sobriety since April 1980 being 24 months, with a range of one to 36 months.

Secondly, the number of members sober for the six months prior to April 1983 was assessed. The same criteria

of credibility were used and 40 out of 56 were sober. A further 5 were sober by their own unsupported evidence, and 11 were believed not to be sober during this six-month period.

There is a great deal of encouragement in these figures, though it has to be recognized that a truly objective assessor was not involved and the severity of alcoholism is not known.

There does seem to be evidence that the sympathetic identification, purposeful support and professional security which Doctors and Dentists Groups offer to colleagues is a valuable contribution to the overall management of the problem.

Much of the discussion at group meetings is concerned with the relationship between personal alcoholism and the practice of medicine or dentistry, a discussion which members find very difficult to have in other environments, including the psychiatrist's consulting room.

If you can help us please do so. We can see no valid reason why any practising professional should not at least come to know us. Of the 65 who have joined the North West Group, only one has requested that the notice of monthly meetings be discontinued. Even the alcoholic who continues drinking is reminded each month that somebody cares. We can be reached through the Medical Council on Alcoholism, 3 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EE (01 234 4182).

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### ***Awards and Honorary Fellowships***

The Royal Society of Medicine has awarded the 1983 Baron Dr ver Heyden de Lancy Law Prize to PROFESSOR ROBERT BLUGLASS. The prize is awarded annually to the Fellow adjudged to have made the most outstanding contribution to the advancement of the links between law and medicine.

PROFESSOR SIR MARTIN ROTH and DR JOHN HORDER have been elected Honorary Fellows of the Royal Society of Medicine.

### ***Training Posts in Mental Handicap—A Warning***

There appear to be a number of training posts, both SHO and Registrar, in mental handicap hospitals which are not connected up to any general training scheme. This has been discussed at the Court of Electors and by the Mental Handicap Section. They agree that in future all training posts in mental handicap hospitals must be part of a training scheme, so that they will generally be occupied by a particular trainee for not more than six months. In future, posts which are not integrated will not be given educational approval and should thus become available for redistribution.

I now read the advertisement section of the *BMJ* and

*Lancet* with renewed interest. (Some of them still advertise posts as suitable for the (defunct) DPM.) Some of my 'worried, Belgrave Square' letters turn out to be without foundation, and you then have the pleasure of letting me know that I have got hold of the wrong end of the stick.

J. L. T. BIRLEY  
*Dean*

### ***Monitoring the Mental Health Act***

The Public Policy Committee Working Party on the Mental Health Act has been asked to monitor the working of the Act and to note any problems or difficulties that arise. It would be glad to receive comments which may be sent to Professor Robert Bluglass, Chairman, PPC Working Party on the Mental Health Act, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG.

### ***Dependence/Addiction Group: 1983-84***

The membership of the Dependence/Addiction Group for 1983-84 is as follows:

*Chairman:* Dr Thomas Bewley; *Secretary:* Dr I. Akhter; *Executive Committee:* Drs I. G. Christie, B. Hore, J. S. Madden, J. Morgan, K. J. B. Rix, J. Strang and A. P. Thorley.