

Council Reports

Psychiatric Services to Accident and Emergency Departments.

CR43. January 1996. 16 pp. £5.00

This report discusses aspects of the psychiatric service required in the Accident and Emergency Department. It discusses the need for psychiatric support, staffing and facilities and also contains sections on education, the Mental Health Act, and service evaluation. Although in some areas community psychiatric services offer 24-hour a day, seven day a week emergency cover, in many others the Accident and Emergency Department is the main out-of-hours crisis intervention service. Accident and Emergency staff, therefore, feel an increasing need to have some psychiatric guidance and the availability of prompt advice. The report makes recommendations in the areas of staffing, facilities, education and the application of the Mental Health Act, particularly Section 136 of the Act in England and Wales.

The Evidence of Children.

CR44. January 1996. 18 pp. £5.00

Within the criminal justice system, child witnesses continue to be disadvantaged, even following the changes introduced in the Criminal Justice Act, 1991. They are even expected to give a coherent account of often multiple abusive experiences, during a single videotaped interview. These children, who have often been severely traumatised by abuse, wait for many months before the trial, often not knowing whether they will be required to give evidence. Therapy is discouraged before they have given evidence, based on the belief that their evidence might become contaminated by the therapy. In court, children are subjected to cross examination which they perceive as intimidating and hostile, often in language not appropriate to their status as children. This report makes several recommendations:

- The report recognises the need to enable children to describe worrying experiences informally, before being interviewed in a videotaped setting. Such initial talks must be carefully documented.
- The report strongly recommends the full implementation of the Pigot Committee

proposals, allowing children to give evidence and be cross-examined before a judge at an early, preliminary, video-recorded hearing, which can later be shown to a jury at the trial. This would reduce delay significantly.

- The report recommends formal training in how to communicate appropriately with children, for all those involved with child witnesses, including the legal profession.

Consensus Statement on the Assessment and Investigation of an Elderly Person with Suspected Cognitive Impairment by a Specialist Old Age Psychiatry Service.

CR49. October 1995. 22 pp. £5.50.

Dementia and cognitive impairment problems are increasingly common in the ageing population. Timely, accurate and comprehensive assessment is the key to meeting the needs of patients and carers, ensuring that unnecessary morbidity and dependency are promptly tackled. Experience has shown that certain approaches by specialist old age psychiatry services can be codified as standards which should be expected in every district, providing there is proper resourcing of the services, and these are likely to achieve the best outcome for all. The emphasis is on focusing expertise on older people at home with such problems at an early stage, using a coordinated approach aiming to reverse the reversible and maintain independence, although often with support, for as long as possible.

This report outlines the philosophy and key features of the approach of modern old age psychiatry services. It sets the approach to assessment in the context of College advice on the resources required for such services. Advice to purchasers on appropriate services is the major aim.

Council Reports may be purchased at the College or by mail-order. Further information and telephone orders: Kerstin Sayoud, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG (Telephone: 0171 235 2351 ext. 146). Cheques should be made payable to the Royal College of Psychiatrists.