



advocate and clinician (Graley *et al*, 1996). In some cases participants suggested that previous advocates had created mistrust by behaving unacceptably. On the other hand, some older nurses and psychiatrists seemed unconvinced by any moves to support greater patient autonomy.

Confusion over the role of the advocate remained common, even among those supportive of advocacy, and participants felt that clinicians might be more reassured of the legitimacy of advocacy if advocates had access to recognised and standardised training themselves.

An account of this project may be found in the February and June 2003 editions of *The Advocate*, the newsletter of the UK Advocacy Network.

GRALEY, R., MOONEY, L. & CONLAN, E. (1996) Relationships with staff. In *Advocacy Code of Practice* (eds E. Conlan & T. Day) (developed by UKAN for the Mental Health Task Force User Group) Department of Health, London.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS (1999) Patient advocacy (Council Report CR74). London: Royal College of Psychiatrists.

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Referral letters to child and adolescent mental health services

In the face of substantial demand, many out-patient child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) triage referrals on the basis of referral letter information. The validity of this procedure is uncertain; it is often asserted that referral letters provide a poor guide to clinical status. Using routinely collected data from one CAMHS team, we investigated the congruence between the main problem highlighted in the referral letter, and the subsequent specialist assessment diagnosis.

Among 98 children whose main problem in the referral letter was a behaviour problem, there were various diagnoses at assessment: hyperkinetic disorders formed the single largest group (23%), with almost as many emotional (17%) or conduct disorders (17%). Hyperactivity/inattention was the main problem in 39 referral letters: 51% of these children subsequently received a diagnosis of hyperkinetic disorder. Four of the eight children whose main problem in the referral letter was an eating problem received a diagnosis of anorexia or

bulimia. The greatest specificity was from the 83 letters highlighting emotional symptoms as the main problem: 67% received a diagnosis of an emotional disorder (two combined with conduct disorder). Thus, letters identifying emotional problems or hyperactivity/inattention often provided a guide to clinical diagnosis.

However, children referred with 'behaviour problems' could be found to have any of a number of clinical diagnoses at assessment. This suggests that such referrals cannot be reliably triaged before assessment without considering additional information. This presents a serious problem for services with substantial assessment waiting lists. Other factors that might also influence triage, such as the child's functional impairment, problem severity, or risk behaviour, need similar investigation.

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the college

Annual election of Honorary Officers

Notice to Fellows and Members

Fellows and Members of the College are reminded of their rights in connection with the elections for the offices of Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, Editor and Librarian. All Honorary Officers are eligible for re-election.

The nominating meeting of the Council will be held on 26 April and the last date for receiving nominations will therefore be 24 May. The relevant Bye-laws and Regulations are printed below:

Extracts from the Bye-laws

Section XII – the other Honorary Officers

1. The Council shall, in accordance with the Regulations, make its nominations for the offices of Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, Editor and Librarian at the first meeting after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known. Written nominations for the above Honorary Offices, accompanied in each case by the nominee's written consent to stand for election, may also

be lodged with the Registrar at such time as may be prescribed by the Regulations, provided that each such nomination is supported in writing by not less than twelve Members of the College who are not members of the Council.

2. The Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, Editor and Librarian shall be elected from amongst the Fellows, by the Members of the College, in each case in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Regulations.

Section XIV – the Registrar and Deputy Registrars

3. The Registrar shall hold office as such for a term of not more than five consecutive College years.

Extract from the Regulations

Section XII – election of the other Honorary Officers

1. The method of electing the Honorary Officers other than the President, the Vice-Presidents, Sub-Deans and Deputy Registrars shall be the same as that for

electing the President*, save that nominations from Members of the College who are not members of the Council shall be lodged with the Registrar between the first day of June in any calendar year and the date which is four clear weeks after that meeting of the Council which is the first held after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known.

* *i.e. Written nominations, accompanied in each case by the nominee's written consent to stand for election, may be lodged with the Registrar, provided that each such nomination is supported in writing by not less than twelve Members of the College who are not members of the Council. An election by ballot shall be held in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations.*

Winter Business Meeting 2004

The Winter Business Meeting of Council was held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 27 January 2004. Thirty-three Members of the College were present.

Minutes

The Minutes of the Winter Business Meeting held at the Royal College of