

of children between the ages of 7 and 16 are said to have watched at least one of the 34 video films considered to be so violent or so obscene as to merit the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Twenty-two per cent of children are reported as having seen 4 or more of the videos on the DPP's list, now grown to 51. Habitual watchers are said to come most frequently from inner cities and suburbs and from the North of England, but less often from rural areas and from Wales or East Anglia.

The investigation included questions about other films and television programmes. In twenty per cent of the sample of 4,500 children, the questionnaires given to children could be seen alongside the answers their parents had given to questions on their opinions. It is clear that parents have little idea of the range of unsavoury stimuli to which their children are exposed. The effect of parental attitude is much less clear. The research workers were interested in the ages at which parents allowed their children to watch *Benny Hill* or *Carry On* films. Since one of my pleasures in the past has been to feed small boys on knickerbocker glories and then watch them rolling in the aisles at a *Carry On* film, I looked eagerly for possible correlations. However, the parental statements can be, and indeed are, interpreted in different ways to support opposing arguments. A total ban on *Grange Hill* may be one way to head for trouble.

Certainly many children seem to enjoy horror films and they relish the freedom of running them over and over again,

with particular emphasis on the 'best' bits. When David Warner loses his head rather neatly in *The Omen*, the moment is quickly passed in the cinema, but on video the full horror can be repeated, slowed up, frozen or even popped on and off.

Violence in some films, as in *The Deerhunter*, can make a serious and even highly moral point. To complete this review, I sampled one of the videos mentioned in this report. It was totally lacking in artistic merit and the story existed only as an excuse for revelling in violence, blood and cannibalism, with a more subtle undercurrent of particular brutality towards the old and the handicapped. I was nauseated but I am very concerned at the thought of the large number of children, and indeed adults, who are seemingly unaffected by such a video and the others like it.

This research report is concerned with a very important subject. It, however, is not published by a reputable scientific journal and so has not been subjected to critical peer review. It is, as they confess, a hurried piece of work. The details given of the methodology, particularly of the sampling technique, are inadequate and the bland assurances of the reliability of the questionnaires are not convincing. This is a pity. Research of this sort can well have the opposite effect to what the well meaning sponsors intended.

ANN GATH

*Drummond Clinic  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk*

---

## News Items

### **MIND Wallchart on the Mental Health Act 1983**

MIND has produced an authoritative wallchart on compulsory detention under the Mental Health Act 1983. It presents information on Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 135, 136, 37 and 41 and covers six aspects of management: duration of detention; procedure; medical recommendation; removal to hospital; discharge; and Mental Health Review Tribunals.

The wallchart, measuring 23" x 16½", is colour-coded for easy reference. It costs £1.20 (including postage and packing) and is only available from: MIND Bookshop, 155 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 3EF.

### **Code of Practice for Discharging Patients**

The National Schizophrenia Fellowship has recently produced a booklet entitled 'Good Relations: A Code of Practice for those Discharging Patients'. The NSF feel that a recognized code of procedure should be followed when discharging patients who may not be fully capable of maintaining themselves independently in the community. It emphasizes the need to identify a 'caring' or 'concerned' relative or friend to whom the patient would wish to go on discharge in the belief that such a person has a key part to play

in the caring for the patient in the community and could, with benefit to all concerned, fit into the healing and management processes.

Copies of the booklet are available at a cost of 30p (45p including postage) from the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, 78-79 Victoria Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4NS. (Discounts are available for bulk orders.)

### **Peter Beckett Postgraduate Research Award**

The Peter Beckett Postgraduate Research Award, worth approximately £300, will be given to the candidate who, in the opinion of the Award Committee, has carried out the best research project in psychiatry during his or her postgraduate training. This research should normally have been carried out in Ireland. The Award is open to all postgraduate trainees in psychiatry who have completed at least three years of a formal training programme approved by the Committee. Applications should reach the Medical School Office not later than 31 December 1984 and should include a description of the completed research project. Address: Medical School Office, Faculty of Medical and Dental Sciences, Trinity College, Dublin 2.