

and reduce the number of conventional meetings involving all academic and research staff to once a year. The potential for other developments, especially for distance learning and MRCPsych courses, is obviously considerable and exploration of the scope of educational uses of televideo links is an

important item for future agendas. As we remarked earlier, we are aware of other departments that have similar problems of geographical explosion even if not quite as marked as our own. We would recommend to them that the televideo conference solution is well worth exploring.

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The times

Invalid Care Allowance – an allowance for the carers

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This is the third and last in my series on recent changes incorporating the introduction of Disability Living Allowance in the allowances for the mentally ill. The Invalid Care Allowance is unusual in that it is paid to the person who does the caring and not the person being cared for.

Like many other allowances, uptake is poor due to carers not knowing about it. Psychiatrists can do a lot to change this.

Who qualifies

Invalid Care Allowance is a Social Security benefit to help people who look after someone who gets Attendance Allowance (AA), Constant Attendance Allowance (CAA) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at the middle or higher rate for help with personal care.

From 6 April 1992, it is £32.55 per week; a Christmas bonus is also paid each year.

The following four points have to be met.

- (a) A carer must be at least 16 but under 60 if a woman, 65 if a man.
- (b) A carer must be looking after someone for at least 35 hours per week.
- (c) The person cared for must be getting AA, CAA or DLA as above.
- (d) The carer must normally live in the U.K.

Who doesn't qualify

- (a) As a carer on a course of full-time education (this is defined as 21 hours or more of full-time study each week).
- (b) A carer on holiday from a course of full-time education.
- (c) A carer who earns £40 a week or more once expenses are taken off. Expenses allowance are things like child minding fees, fares to work and National Insurance contributions.
- (d) If the person cared for has not applied for AA, CAA or DLA they should be encouraged to do so. The person cared for must know they are to receive one of those benefits before a claim can be made by the carer for invalid care allowance.

Carers who are getting Income Support, Housing Benefit or Community Charge support

If carers or their partners are getting Income Support, they should still claim for Invalid Care Allowance. The amount of invalid care paid is taken off the Income Support. However, after that, an extra amount of money called "Carer Premium" is added on to the Income Support.

If carers are getting Housing Benefit or Community Charge Benefit, they should still claim for Invalid Care Allowance. The local authority takes the Carer Premium into account when they work out how much Housing Benefit or Community Charge Benefit is payable. However, the carer must tell the office that pays Income Support, Housing Benefit or Community Charge Benefit that they get Invalid Care Allowance in order to get the extra help.

How to claim

There are two ways to claim.

- (a) A form can be picked up from a local post office or local Social Security Office; the telephone number and address are in the telephone book under Social Security or Benefits Agency.
- (b) One can contact the invalid Care Allowance Unit directly, their address is:
ICA Unit
Palatine House
Lancaster Road
Preston PR1 1NS
Telephone: 0253 856123

For further advice there is:

- (a) The Citizens Advice Bureau.

- (b) Freeline Social Security 0800 666 555. The phone call is free.
- (c) The carer can get in touch with:
The Carers' National Association
29 Chilworth Mews
London W2 3RG
Telephone: 071 724 7776

If the carer cannot get Invalid Care Allowance

It is worth noting that if carers are looking after someone who gets AA, CAA or DLA at the middle or higher rate for help with personal care, but cannot get Invalid Care Allowance, they still may get help from the 'Home Responsibilities Protection Scheme'.

This is a scheme to make sure that people do not get less State Retirement Pension in the future just because they stay at home to look after someone. Carers should ask for form CF 411 Home Responsibilities Protection, which is available from any post office or Social Security Office.

The first article in this series was published in the June 1992 issue of the *Psychiatric Bulletin* and the second in the October 1992 issue.

The Merck, Sharp and Dohme Prize in Psychiatry

The winner of the 1992 Merck, Sharp and Dohme Prize in Psychiatry (East Anglia) is Dr Tony Rao, Senior House Officer at Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge, with an entry on 'Suicide Risk in Dementia: An Under-Recognised Concept?'

The Academic Department of Psychiatry announces that the competition has now been

opened for the 1993 MSD Prize: first prize £250 and second prize £80. SHOs and registrars in psychiatry working in the East Anglian Region are eligible. For details, please contact: Ms Mary Coburn, PGME/Medical Services Manager, Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge CB1 5EF (telephone 0223 218673).