

An open letter to the President

Dear Dr Birley

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Autumn Quarterly Meeting includes Psychiatry in the Private Sector, a session which seems out of place in a scientific meeting.

This is not simply a question of the merits or otherwise of private sector psychiatric practice. Also, it is clear that private practice is a subject which could be discussed in an objective and balanced manner. The point is whether or not this particular session should be given by implication academic status equivalent to the other session topics, such as psychiatric genetics

or community care, since the individual speakers are all representatives or employees of private health firms and include some whose job it is to promote private practice.

The decision to include this session risks lowering the academic standing of the meeting as a whole and bringing the Royal College into disrepute. The College would be better to follow-up its previous support for an improved NHS, the only option for the vast majority of our patients.

Yours sincerely

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Glyn Lewis
R. H. Cawley
Isaac Marks
Pamela Taylor
Raymond Levy
Klaus Bergmann
Nick Temple
Brian Toone
Stephen Wolkind
Eileen Joyce
Michael Gill
E. Guinness
Michael Farrell
V. L. Nimgaonkar
Deborah Chee
L. Mynors-Wallis
Peter Jones
Penny Thompson
Rachel Brown
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Claire Gerada
Jenny Bearn
S. G. Potts
B. C. Beats
Lyn Pilowsky
Judith Jackson
G. F. Searle
Keith Lloyd
Helena Fox
Parimela Moodley
Tony Maden
S. W. Lewis
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Anthony David
Robert Kerwin
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M. Abas
P. Silverstone
J. H. Stone
G. O.'Sullivan
R. Araya
R. Ball
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Jane Milton
Anthony J. Pelosi
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Dr Birley replies

Dear Dr Appleby

Thank you for the letter of 17 October from yourself and your colleagues.

Private care is a legitimate business and makes a contribution to the care of our citizens. The extent of this contribution, and the effect which this has on the National Health Service is, of course, a matter of debate. As to the actual content and standard of the session, I feel that you are prejudging the occasion. It

is surely better for the speakers to be drawn from private care when they are describing its activities. The audience, which I hope will contain a number of your fellow signatories, will be able to ask questions and discuss their particular concerns.

Yours sincerely

J. L. T. Birley

President

Royal College of Psychiatrists