

anonymised. The reports should cover the general areas of activity audited, the overall conclusions and recommendations made, and plans for action or procedural changes, the necessity for which has been revealed by the audit (HC(91)2 para 8). There should also be a record of when a review of the results of the changes should be made and the proposed methods of review. These reports will normally be

submitted to management through the medical Audit Committee.

These interim guidelines have been endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health.

The conference is grateful to Dr Peter Beck and to Dr Anthony Hopkins for their help in preparing this guidance.

Winter Quarterly Meeting, 1992

The Winter Quarterly Meeting was held at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London on 21 and 22 January 1992 under the Presidency of Professor A. C. P. Sims.

Business Meeting

The business meeting was held on 22 January, attended by 24 Members of the College.

Minutes

The minutes of the Autumn Quarterly Meeting held at Kensington Town Hall, London on 23 October 1991 were approved and signed.

Registrar's report

The Confidential Enquiry into 'Homicide and Suicide in Mentally Ill Persons' has now found premises at No. 16 Belgrave Square and a Director, Dr Bill Boyd, currently Treasurer of the College. The Department of Health is providing the financial backing.

The College has responded to the initial reports of the three advisory groups to the Reed Committee on Mentally Abnormal Offenders. There will be further deliberations of this Committee with a strong input of general as well as forensic psychiatrists.

The division of purchasers and providers has now pervaded many of the reports coming from the Sections and Working Groups of the College. A working party jointly established with the Faculty of Public Health is endeavouring to provide members of the College with some guidelines to assist them to maintain high standards of clinical practice under these new arrangements.

Two new special interest groups will be formally established at our Spring Meeting in Dundee. They are the special interest group for transcultural psychiatry and the special interest group for management issues.

There is now some discussion about the frequency of meetings. It is suggested that overall attendance would be highest if there were only two meetings – the Annual Meeting and a second early in the year. The meetings could be longer and have more parallel sessions and we welcome comments from all the members about this.

PROFESSOR ANN GATH

Discussion paper on frequency of College meetings

It has been suggested that the format of the College's Quarterly Scientific Meetings should change. This paper puts forward the proposal that there should be two large scientific meetings per year, one of which might be held in London and the other might rotate and be held where suitable conference facilities are available.

Members and speakers are experiencing greater problems in claiming travelling expenses and study leave in order to attend College meetings. While attendance at Section meetings is growing, the

attendance at some Divisional meetings is decreasing. The number of delegates at the Autumn and Annual meetings continues to grow each year while attendance at the Winter and Spring meetings is variable. It is anticipated, as at the recent Annual Meeting, that if the College meetings are limited to two per year then attendance overall will increase.

The suggestion to restrict the College meetings has come, not only from many Chairmen of Sections and Divisions, but also from members of the Programmes and Meetings Committees. A paper

was produced by the Honorary Secretary, Professor Chris Thompson, in 1987, in which a revision of the Quarterly meetings format was suggested, although no further action was taken at that time.

Preliminary soundings seem to suggest that with higher numbers more economical packages can be obtained from conference venues, particularly if conferences are held over weekends. For instance, the Metropole group of hotels (London, Blackpool, Birmingham, Brighton) have agreed to a reduced rate for members if meetings are rotated to these four centres over two years. There are other hotel chains who might be able to offer similar packages.

The College Bye-Laws state that, in addition to the Annual General Meeting "not less than three Quarterly General Meetings shall be held in each College year. The date and place of each Quarterly General Meeting shall be fixed by the President or by the Council". This means that four Business Meetings for the membership need to be held each year. It would be possible to change the Bye-Laws and to suggest to the Privy Council that there should be two General Meetings per year. Alternatively, two meetings could be held in conjunction with the two scientific meetings and the other two could be held at the College. They could be held on the same day as Council, possibly in the afternoon followed by an evening reception or a special lecture. A notice would need to appear in the *Bulletin* informing members of the dates of these meetings. Important motions, as at present, could always be deferred to the Annual General Meeting.

Recommendations

1. Two 3–4 day meetings would be held – the summer meeting (Annual Meeting) in July and the winter meeting in January/February.
2. One meeting per year might be held in London, the other one might be held in appropriate conference locations outside London.
3. Workshops, CME courses and satellite meetings would be incorporated into the programme. There would be a greater emphasis on these activities.
4. Named lectures, previously held at Autumn and Spring Meetings (Maudsley Lecture, Mental Health Care Delivery), would be moved to the Summer Meeting.
5. The Maudsley Bequest Lectures could be held the day before the Winter Meeting which could make this a four-day event. These lectures would retain their original remit of being aimed primarily at trainees.
6. The exhibition area could be increased because sponsors would only be exhibiting twice a year. The format used at the recent Brighton meeting was very successful. Both members and exhibiting companies seemed to prefer this more professional approach.
7. The increase in sponsorship would enable the Programmes and Meetings Committee to invite eminent speakers from overseas.

Members are invited to submit any comments to the Registrar, Professor Ann Gath.

*Approved by Council
January 1992*

Information Technology working group

An Information Technology working group has been established by the Research Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and is chaired by Professor McClelland of Queen's University Belfast. It is hoped that the group will act as focal point

for exchange of ideas on information technology and mental illness. Members of the College who are interested are invited to contact Professor McClelland.