In the penultimate chapter entitled 'Who pays?', an attempt is made to estimate the weekly cost associated with admission to a mental hospital, e.g. a wife hospitalized, two children to residential care, husband's loss of overtime, etc—approximately £200 per week; wage-earner hospitalized, wife can cope with children—approximately £109 per week; single man, no dependents—£88 per week.

The authors discuss the dichotomy whereby medical costs are the liability of the Health Service and social costs the responsibility of the Local Authority. 'Treatment and rehabilitation are thus separated both in cost and responsibility . . . in mental health costs, accountability and quality of service remain separated . . . if community services do not exist or are not of a kind to prevent people from relapsing and requiring readmission to hospital, then it would appear that there is no direct cost to the Local Authority.' If, however, the Local Authority have to take children into care the cost to the Local Authority may be greater than the cost of hospital treatment and Social Security combined. It is suggested that the Local Authorities can here make a saving in cash, since 'a social worker only has to keep an average of two children out of residential care over a period of one year to have paid his annual salary and overhead costs'.

The final chapter urges that priorities for the future should aim to break the cycle of deprivation. A plea is made for prevention. Genetic influences are mentioned and 'screening at an early age' is considered to be 'an obvious start to evaluating the size of the problem'. Training and re-training are advocated, the present selection processes for these limited facilities being 'not appropriate for the greater number of patients'. Social activities (such as a restaurant club run by the PRA) are advised to help overcome the loneliness and isolation of patients.

The authors opine that 'it would not be a difficult exercise, at least as a pilot study, to follow up these 100 patients with a view to examining the processes which could lead to a more satisfactory life-style' and that 'the whole question of remotivation is fundamental to the problems associated with these patients' life-style and deserves an in-depth study'. Maybe we shall see a development of these views.

McCowen and Wilder have once again highlighted the pitiful plight of the 'uncured' patient, and their paper is yet another indictment of statutory authorities with split responsibility, enabling each to blame the other for the run-down of services and the failure to establish anything in their place.

I hope that this booklet will be placed in the libraries of all psychiatric hospitals and units and will be considered by their Journal Clubs. Immediately this should lead to an examination of ineffectual or absent follow-up arrangements.

DONAL EARLY

MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

The MRC have set up a Perceptual and Cognitive Performance Unit at the Experimental Psychology Laboratory, University of Sussex, under the direction of Professor W. P. Colquhoun, from April 1976. The Unit is being constituted from a group of staff at the Laboratory headed by Professor Colquhoun (previously forming an outstation of the MRC Applied Psychology Unit, Cambridge).

The terms of reference of the new Unit are as follows:

(a) Investigation of performance characteristics of normal adults in relation to tasks reflecting a range of perceptual and cognitive abilities required in occupational, and to a minor extent, other situations.

(b) Examination of the changes produced in these characteristics of performance by intrinsic and extrinsic factors and their physiological concomitants.

(c) To undertake, at the request of the Council, work on specific topics within the field of perceptual and cognitive performance.

The Unit's research programme is seen as being of direct relevance to the solution of some practical problems in industry, the armed forces and the hospital services. Common to all of these groups is the necessity so to organize the available work force that adequate levels of efficiency are maintained at all times in respect of a wide range of human activities varying from recognition of small but significant changes in the environment to optimal decision making in the light of both presented and memorized information. In addition, the programme will be of relevance to the problems posed by fluctuations in the performance efficiency of people working a 'normal' day, for instance, managerial and administrative staff, teachers and their pupils.

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