Alcohol and Drugs

There was a debate in the House of Lords on 19 March, initiated by the Earl of Kimberley, who described himself as a recovered alcoholic. It cannot be said that anything new or constructive emerged, but it was certainly emphasized that the alcoholism problem is still a growing one. Thus, drunkenness convictions rose from 75,000 to 99,000 in the years 1958–73, and those for persons under 18 from 1,880 to 4,725; and deaths from cirrhosis of the liver have increased by 33 per cent.

The composition of the new Advisory Committee on Alcoholism was announced on 26 March. The Chairman is Prof. W. I. N. Kessel, and the members include Prof. Trethowan and Drs. Bluglass, D. L. Davies and Griffith Edwards.

A Modification Order has been made under the Misuse of Drugs Act, adding difenoxin and Bromo-STP to Class A in the list. The latter is a hallucinogen, and its misuse has become a matter of concern.

It was stated in a written answer on 27 February that in the last year about 8,350,000 prescriptions for barbiturates had been dispensed; the Barbiturates Working Group advised that a considerable reduction in barbiturate prescribing was desirable and a campaign is being mounted accordingly.

The Scientology Report and Psychotherapy

On 25 February, in a written answer, Mrs. Castle stated that she had informed the organizations concerned that she remained unconvinced of the benefits that might result from statutory registration of psychotherapists.

Huntington's Chorea

On 19 March Mr. Peter Walker initiated an Adjournment Debate on the subject of this disorder, from which he believed up to 6,000 persons might be suffering. He wished the disease to be made notifiable and asked that many patients should be provided for in other than psychiatric or geriatric hospitals; that more research should be done; that doctors and social workers should be more fully briefed; and that attendance allowances should be more liberally given. He emphasized the stresses and anxieties of affected families. Dr. Owen replied in sympathetic but general terms, promising to consider most of Mr. Walker's suggestions.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE
Course in Research Methodology

It is proposed to hold a two- or three-day course in research methods, probably in the South of England, during the Easter recess in 1976. The course would be designed for all trainees in psychiatry particularly interested in research and would serve as an introduction to a wide range of methods. It is hoped that the course would be approved so that fees and expenses for those attending would be reimbursed by the DHSS.

Before final arrangements are made, however, we would like to have some idea of the number of people who would be interested in attending such a course. If you are interested please write to me at The Institute of Psychiatry, De Crespigny Park, Denmark Hill, London, SE5 8AF. Further details will be notified subsequently.

MALCOLM LADER,
Secretary, Research Committee.

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