CORRESPONDENCE

WOMEN IN PSYCHIATRY

DEAR SIR,

I have read the letters between Dr. Harris and the Department of Health and Social Security with interest but am not reassured by Dr. Owen's reply. Even if a 'special contractual option' is available for women consultants with family commitments this may still not have the flexibility required.

Sessional posts have enabled women with children (including myself) to work a few sessions a week initially and gradually build up to a full-time appointment.

Before April 1974 child psychiatrists were employed by the Inner London Education Authority in special schools and social services departments. The appointments to both these are now the responsibility of the Area Health Authorities, and psychiatric appointments to schools are made by fourteen different Area Health Authorities. The Medical Department of the Inner London Education Authority valued and initiated links between posts in schools and in clinics or hospital departments and was continuing to develop such links at the time of the reorganization of the health service. Nevertheless, it was possible for special consideration to be given to women who could only work on a sessional basis and could be gradually helped to increase sessions regardless of area or district boundaries.

It is understandable that since reorganization more of such linked appointments are being made to create full-time consultant posts in Areas. I feel sure that Area Medical Officers will wish to encourage women doctors but understandably wish to link up sessional posts in their Areas with other establishments; thus there is unlikely to be a continuing number of such sessional appointments.

If married women doctors are not given special consideration there is a danger that they will be used as stopgap when a full-time post cannot be filled and they will be regarded as second class professionals.

I suggest that our College should take the lead and build up a register of women doctors, both those training as child psychiatrists and those qualified for consultant posts. It could then inform Regional Health Authorities and Area Health Authorities of women seeking sessional or part-time posts and ensure that their skills are not wasted and that the increasing need for child psychiatric services does not remain unmet.

As with other minority groups, positive discrimination in their favour may be needed to ensure equality.

LORNA M. BRIERLEY.

Medical Department,
County Hall,
London, SE1 7PB.

NEWS ITEMS

Honour

Mr. James Shields has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Medicine by the University of Zurich. Mr. Shields is Senior Lecturer in the Psychiatric Genetics section of the Department of Psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, and has made distinguished contributions to this subject. He has been a member of the Board of Assessors of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* since 1973.

Mental Illness among Minority Ethnic Groups

Following the expression of concern to the Community Relations Commission about lack of knowledge about mental illness among minority ethnic groups, a multi-disciplinary meeting was called recently to examine the questions of diagnosis and treatment, as well as on-going support among these communities. Further research and publications were called for, and the C.R.C. agreed to act as a co-ordinator of work undertaken in this field.

Details of relevant research, including research on diagnosis, treatment, referrals, etc., will be welcomed. Summaries of research projects will be published by the C.R.C., either as part of a regular bulletin or as separate occasional papers.

Please contact Cathy Carmichael, Community Relations Commission, 15/16 Bedford Street, London, WC2E 9HX. Telephone: 01-836 3545, ext. 211.

Mental Health Trust and Research Fund

The Mental Health Trust and Research Fund announces the following change in its grant-giving policy. Until further notice preference will be given to projects costing not more than approximately £3,000, especially those of a pilot nature whose results may lead to larger projects being submitted to Government and other research bodies. Meetings to consider such applications will be held on:

11 November 1975: closing date for applications *15 September 1975.*

9 February 1976: closing date for applications *30 December 1975.*

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