INCEPTORS

The Royal College of Psychiatrists differs in its composition both from its predecessor, the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, and from the other medical Royal Colleges. Membership of the RMPA had been open to any medically qualified person, subject to election and the payment of a subscription, whereas full Membership of the existing Royal Colleges was in general on the basis of a special qualifying examination.

It was hoped that our proposed College would be able to continue the RMPA's traditional coverage of all doctors interested in psychiatry, and particularly of those in training, by maintaining an open category of Affiliates. This the Privy Council refused to accept; however, after prolonged negotiations, two concessions were made. In the first place, those members of the RMPA who were not eligible for Foundation Fellowship or Foundation Membership were allowed to form a closed category of Affiliates; there is to be no further recruitment to their ranks, and their number must gradually diminish. Secondly, a new class, the Inceptors, was provided for in the Bye-Laws approved by the Privy Council. It is in this that our College differs from the other medical Colleges and the object of this note is to explain the conditions, and advantages of entry to the Inceptor class.

Section VI of the College Bye-Laws reads as follows:

> 'For a period of not more than 10 College years, commencing with the Foundation date, there shall be maintained a register of Inceptors of the College.
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> 'A qualified medical practitioner may apply to the Court of Electors for registration as an Inceptor, and the Court of Electors may, if it thinks fit, approve his registration as such. An Inceptor shall pay such registration fee as may be prescribed.
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> 'At the end of each successive year of his registration the status of an Inceptor shall be reviewed by the Court of Electors which, if it thinks fit, shall renew his registration without further payment by him; provided that without the special leave of the Court of Electors no Inceptor, may be registered as such for more than five consecutive years, nor may his registration be renewed after he has reached the age of 40 years.'

It will be seen that the Privy Council's concession allowing the establishment of this class is in the first instance for a period of ten years only. This is to be regarded as a trial period. If the Inceptorship proves to be of value it will be for the College to go back to the Privy Council with a request for the Inceptor class to become a permanent part of its constitution. If it is not a success, the register will automatically close at the end of the trial period, or it can be closed earlier by resolution of a General Meeting of the College.

The Register has been opened and there are now just over 100 Inceptors. These are trainees in psychiatry who wish to be linked in a formal way with the College which they will eventually join as Members. Inceptors have the opportunity to play an active part in the life of the College by serving as co-opted representatives on certain Standing Committees and on the Committees of the Regional Divisions. The future of psychiatry and the standards of psychiatric practice depend upon the quality of recruits to the specialty and upon the nature of the post-graduate training which they receive. The College, since its foundation in 1971, has been acutely aware of its responsibility to promote better post-graduate training, as well as of its duty to assess the products of such training in the examination for the Membership. For all these reasons it is highly desirable that the class of Inceptors should expand and flourish and play an increasingly important role in the College's affairs.

There are at present over 1,000 training posts in psychiatry in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, some of which (for example, Senior Registrar posts) are filled by persons who have already passed the Membership examination of the College. On the other hand there are many young psychiatrists in training who have not yet taken the examination, and who are not Inceptors of the College. If the College is to prosper it is essential that it should encourage young doctors coming into psychiatry to take an active interest in the affairs of the College at the earliest possible opportunity, and it is equally desirable that the College should take an active interest in their welfare and training from the start.

In practical terms, for an annual fee of £4 Inceptors are entitled to receive the *Journal* (including *News and Notes*) and may attend all Scientific Meetings and such lectures and training courses as the Court of Electors may arrange. Although Inceptors are not entitled to vote, Council is anxious to have their representatives co-opted to the Standing Committees and their sub-committees (including the Trainees' Sub-Committee of the Education Committee, which has widespread Regional and Specialty representation) and the Executive Committees of the Divisions and Sections.

It is earnestly hoped that all Fellows and Members of the College will do everything in their power to ensure that psychiatrists in training should apply to become Inceptors. It is for all of us to ensure that this experiment is a successful one.

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