**Online archive 25c**

**The College Research Unit today**

*This online archive gives a fuller account of the activities of the Research Unit than could be included in Chapter 10.*

**GROWTH AND INCOME**

The number of people employed by the College Research Unit (CRU) reached 50 in early 2005 and for that year its income will be about £2.9 million. The larger part of the Unit’s income is from grants for its activities. Table 1 shows the main grants that have been secured between 1999 and 2005. As can be seen, the largest single grant is from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) for the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (NCCMH). ‘Subscription income’ refers mainly to payments by mental health care provider organisations that participate in multi-centre quality improvement projects managed by the CRU. The work of the Unit has remained remarkably faithful to the broad aims of the initial application for audit funds.

**CLINICAL GUIDELINES**

The National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health is jointly managed by the College Research Unit and the Centre for Outcomes Research and Effectiveness (CORE) at the British Psychological Society (BPS). Dr Tim Kendall, the Deputy Director of the CRU, is co-director of the NCCMH together with Mr Steve Pilling, a psychologist and director of BPS CORE. The NICE guidelines are correctly the gold standard in the English National Health Service (NHS) and, increasingly, mental health services are
expected to implement their recommendations. Table 2 shows the guidelines that have been published and which are planned.

THE STRUCTURE AND QUALITY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Over the past 5 years, the Unit has established a number of national quality improvement initiatives. Tables 3 and 4 list these and show the number of services that participate. These include services in all of the countries within the jurisdiction of the College (England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and, increasingly services from abroad. The longest established network is the Quality Network for In-patient Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (QNIC). About 85% of eligible services in the UK are members. Although the networks differ from one another in some important respects, they all follow a similar process of quality improvement activities. This is based on the clinical audit cycle. Standards, for service organisation and service processes, are agreed; services review themselves against these standards; services then receive a visit from a group of peers drawn from other services in the network; a report detailing local performance is prepared; services make action plans on the basis of this and the cycle starts again. In addition, the networks hold annual forums and produce an annual report that summarises the national picture.

The Electroconvulsive Therapy Accreditation Service (ECTAS) adds in the element of pass/fail. ECTAS is a good example of one key strength of a unit housed within a Royal College – longevity and constancy of purpose. John Pippard’s second audit of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) was the first major project undertaken by the Unit in 1989. The third audit was conducted in 1996 by Dr Richard Duffet. ECTAS was established in response to the finding that key aspects of ECT practice still had not
improved despite the College’s work. The Accreditation system has resulted in demonstrable improvement and has already led to some ECT clinics acknowledging that they cannot meet acceptable standards and closing down or merging with a neighbouring clinic that can. Other networks are planned, including for community CAMHS (Children Act and the Mental Health Act) and an accreditation system for acute psychiatric wards. The latter will develop from a national audit of violence in mental health in-patient settings that was funded by the Healthcare Commission.

OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT
During his term as Director, Professor John Wing was commissioned by the Department of Health to develop an outcome measure that could be used by mental health services in routine practice and as part of a national mental health minimum data set. The resulting measure (the Health of the Nation Outcomes Scales – HoNOS) has not only just been adopted by the English Department of Health but has also been mandated throughout Australia and New Zealand and is widely used in a number of other countries.

HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH
The CRU is uniquely placed to engage large number of services in multi-centre health services research studies. It has been successful at attracting grants to do this from the Department of Health. These studies have influenced both practice and policy. They include: a major programme of research about the 1983 Mental Health Act to inform the working group making recommendations about reform of mental health legislation; research about the adequacy of mental health residential care for adults and a separate programme about in-patient services for young people. The latter led directly to the
establishment of QNIC. More recently, the Unit has set up a programme of qualitative research. This was established with a generous donation from Dr Jim Birley. The programme has included two ethnographic studies using participant observation; one of acute psychiatric wards and the other of the experience of life in the community of people with a severe mental illness.

TRAINING

In 2004, the College decided to establish a training unit. One of the reasons was to set up a stream of income that might, eventually, replace the declining surpluses generated by the Publications Department. It was decided that the CRU would be the most appropriate department of the College to house this. The College Education and Training Centre was set up in 2005 and its first events were held in September of that year.

PUBLICATIONS

The CRU has published nearly 300 papers in its 18 years of existence. A full list is available from the College and the CRU website.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT TITLE</th>
<th>FUNDER</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National in-patient child and adolescent psychiatry study (NICAPS)</td>
<td>NHS R&amp;D</td>
<td>1999–2001</td>
<td>£247 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the use of the Children Act and the Mental Health Act in children and adolescents in psychiatric settings (CAMHA-CAPS)</td>
<td>NHS R&amp;D</td>
<td>1999–2001</td>
<td>£71 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCUS: a project to identify and disseminate information about effective practice in CAMHS</td>
<td>Gatsby/DH</td>
<td>1996–2009</td>
<td>c£2 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life on an acute psychiatric ward: an ethnographic study focusing on the experience of patients</td>
<td>Donation by Dr Jim Birley</td>
<td>2000–2003</td>
<td>£100 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QNIC (Quality Network of In-patient CAMHS)</td>
<td>PPP Healthcare</td>
<td>2001–2004</td>
<td>£249 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of therapeutic communities</td>
<td>Community Fund</td>
<td>2002–2005</td>
<td>£151 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care paths of those referred but not admitted to child and adolescent in-patient units</td>
<td>NHS R&amp;D</td>
<td>2003–2005</td>
<td>£189 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A conversation analysis study of prescribing decisions about antipsychotic drugs</td>
<td>Eli-Lilly</td>
<td>2003–2006</td>
<td>£165 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ethnographic study of life in the community for those with a severe mental illness</td>
<td>The Community Fund</td>
<td>2003–2006</td>
<td>£180 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A national audit of the management of violence in in-patient and community settings</td>
<td>Commission for Health Improvement</td>
<td>2003–2005</td>
<td>£190 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A survey of the roles and activities of consultant addiction psychiatrists</td>
<td>NHS R&amp;D</td>
<td>2003–2005</td>
<td>£140 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs and Outcomes of and Satisfaction with In-patient Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</td>
<td>NHS SDO</td>
<td>2003–2006</td>
<td>£300 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional collaboratives for self-harm services</td>
<td>Health Foundation</td>
<td>2005–2009</td>
<td>£360 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UK Prescribing Observatory for Mental Health</td>
<td>Health Foundation</td>
<td>2005–2009</td>
<td>£450 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the Mental Health Improvement Programme</td>
<td>NHS SDO</td>
<td>2005–2007</td>
<td>£200 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development of commissioning standards for therapeutic communities</td>
<td>DH</td>
<td>2004–2005</td>
<td>£48 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development of commissioning standards for in-patient CAMHS units</td>
<td>DH</td>
<td>2005–2006</td>
<td>£48 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A quality improvement network for community CAMHS</td>
<td>DH</td>
<td>2005–2006</td>
<td>£140 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A quality network for non-mental health therapeutic communities</td>
<td>Community Fund</td>
<td>2005–2008</td>
<td>£350 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NICE National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health</td>
<td>National Institute for Clinical Excellence</td>
<td>2001–present</td>
<td>£3 420 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Past and future guidelines developed by the NICE National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (which is jointly managed by the College Research Unit and the CORE Unit of the British Psychological Society) – as of August 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future topics</th>
<th>Past topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression in children and young people</td>
<td>Schizophrenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCD and BDD</td>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bipolar disorder</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antenatal and perinatal mental health</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug misuse – psychosocial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug misuse – detox ADHD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia update</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Quality improvement networks managed by the CRU at August 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Year the network was founded</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality Network for In-patient CAMHS (QNIC)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>72 in-patient CAMHS units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of Communities</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>64 therapeutic communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECT Accreditation Service (ECTAS)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>68 ECT clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Improvement Network for Multi-agency CAMHS</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Recruitment just started</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Other multi-centre quality improvement networks managed by the CRU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Year it was founded</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Audit of Violence</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>266 psychiatric wards/50 NHS trusts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribing Observatory for Mental Health</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>34 NHS trusts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Collaboratives for Self-harm Services</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>45 services (linked A&amp;E/mental health)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The College Research Unit remains a department of the College with its Director accountable to the President. Over the years, the number of people employed by the CRU has increased steadily and it had to relocate three times. The CRU now has 50 full-time staff members in addition to the Director and Deputy Director and a number of people working on a sessional basis. Most income is still derived from outside sources. It now receives no direct research grants from the College, but could not function without the very considerable administrative support provided by the finance, human resources and information technology staff and the College Secretary. It has achieved its remit through a combination of activities, including health services research, systematic evaluations of key service issues, the development, dissemination and application of service standards, clinical guidelines and outcome measures, and the coordination of multi-centre audit projects. The CRU has strong working links with many other organisations, including professional, academic and service user and carer organisations. It has also undertaken collaborative work with most of the faculties of the College.

It now has had nearly 300 publications, a CRU website is regularly updated and the Unit now produces an Annual Report and events brochure. Some publications are regularly updated including *Finding the Evidence*, which aims to provide clinicians with rapid access to the best available secondary research evidence. The second edition has expanded on the first to provide an essential resource for clinicians. The Unit regularly organises conferences and symposia on key issues for mental health, which attract a multi-professional audience. Some of these conferences/symposia have been organised in joint collaboration with the College Faculties. The Unit has been structured to
improve efficiency with four sections: health service research; quality initiatives and networks; the National Collaborating Centre and a section ‘FOCUS’ promoting clinical and organisational effectiveness in child services, with an emphasis on incorporating evidence-based research.

PUBLICATIONS LIST

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS BY CRU STAFF FROM JANUARY 1990 TO PRESENT

1990


1991


1992


1993


1994


1995


1996


1997


1998


2000


2001


221. Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Research Unit (2001) QNIC – Quality Network for In-Patient CAMHS: Service Standards. London: Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Research Unit.


2002


244. Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Research Unit (2002) Community of Communities –Service Standards for Therapeutic Communities. London: Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Research Unit.


2003


2004


2005


