

THE PRESIDENTS' AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTIONS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE 2003

Members of the Society are invited to submit nominations for the Presidents' Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Knowledge. Nominations should be addressed to Lisa Morrison, Scientific Officer, at the Society's Leicester office by **1 March 2003**.

The Presidents' Award is given to candidates normally resident in the United Kingdom as a mid-career award. Unlike the Spearman Medal (which is restricted to the first decade of a career as a psychologist) or election to Honorary Fellowship (which usually takes account of a whole career) it is intended as a timely acknowledgement of the achievements of those who are currently engaged in research of outstanding quality.

Grounds for proposing the candidate should be fully stated by the proposer, but a full CV need not be included. This may be requested by the Research Board once a shortlist of possible recipients has been agreed by the Board.

The Presidents' Award carries with it Life Membership of the Society. Recipients are invited to address the Society at its Annual Conference.

Professor Graham Hitch is the recipient of the Presidents' Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Knowledge 2002.

Feeling like a fully fledged psychologist

BY MICHELLE BROWN

AS part of my course at the University of Bath, each student has to complete a mandatory 30-week placement in the third year. Having a strong interest in memory and a grandfather who suffered from Alzheimer's disease, I decided to find myself a placement that would enable me to expand my understanding of memory and dementia.

I discovered that there is a whole research clinic devoted to memory within the Bath and Bristol area. I was lucky enough to obtain a position, and in October last year I started my voluntary placement at Bristol's Research into Alzheimer's and Care of the Elderly (BRACE) Centre at Blackberry Hill Hospital (see www.brace.org). I was one of seven psychology technicians working with

(among others) a clinical neuropsychologist (my supervisor), a geriatrician, doctors and a memory specialist.

During the placement I was responsible for administering neuropsychological assessments on patients who were believed to be suffering from memory problems or dementia. I was expected to help colleagues with their research, as well as pursuing my own.

Within the first week I was given a large amount of material to read. I needed to familiarise myself with the literature on different dementias and the criteria for diagnosing them. My supervisor provided me with a training programme where I learnt how to administer a variety of psychometric tests and what they tested for. Scoring patients' performance statistically enabled me to determine whether they had any cognitive impairments. If any cognitive deficits were evident, I had to distinguish whether the impairments were sufficient to give a diagnosis of dementia. I also had to try to determine what type of dementia patients may have had. I was able to experience firsthand the cognitive impairment differences between dementias, and to see patients who experienced only minor memory problems or who were cognitively normal for their age.

The development of research ideas is an equally important part of the centre's work, and I encountered a number of interesting research projects at all different stages of their development. I became involved with several of them; I helped with looking at patients' quality of life, with testing patients selected to take part in a psycho-intervention study and with testing Alzheimer's patients' ability to 'dual task'.

I was also given the opportunity to carry out my own piece of research. The research that I chose has consequently become my fourth-year dissertation (another reason for choosing this placement). Some of my colleagues had a lot of research experience, and with their advice I was able to design and carry out my own project.

Working in the clinic meant that I had an enormous amount of contact with patients, which helped me to improve my communication skills. I needed to speak clearly and concisely so patients could hear and understand me. The weekly clinic meetings I attended were also a challenge: I needed to report my findings confidently to the rest of the clinical team.

Looking back on the placement, I can say that it was an amazing experience. I really felt like a qualified psychologist in the making. I would encourage any psychology student to do a placement if they have the chance. I specifically chose the course at Bath because of its work-experience opportunities.

Working within a clinical setting has convinced me that clinical training is something I would really enjoy. If I had not done this 10-month placement, I would still be unsure about my career path. The knowledge and experience that I gained at the BRACE Centre will hopefully stand me in good stead to apply for a clinical training place once I graduate.

■ *Michelle Brown is studying psychology with sociology at the University of Bath.*

Student Writer Competition 2003

THE Psychologist, the Professional Practice Board and the Research Board are again co-sponsoring the Annual Student Writer Competition. This is your chance to educate and entertain the readers, boost your CV and win a great prize!

There will be two categories – one for **undergraduates**; the other for **postgraduates** – and two winners, one from each group. The judges will be drawn from *The Psychologist* and the two boards.

The prize will be:

- your article will be published in *The Psychologist*;
- a certificate; and
- an expenses paid trip to either the Society's London Lectures or Annual Conference (travel, hotel and registration fee).

For further details and how to enter see the November issue of *The Psychologist* (p.586) or contact the Editor on jonsut@bps.org.uk.

Closing date for entries is
FRIDAY 31 JANUARY 2003

SOUTH EAST

South East Regional Assistant Psychologists Meetings are held at the Bracton Centre in Bexley (Dartford) on the first Friday of every month from 2pm to 4pm.

These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss a variety of issues relating to psychology (work related topics; therapeutic interventions; clinical training etc) in a supportive and friendly atmosphere. Contact Lisa Dunnigan at: lisa.dunnigan@ekht.nhs.uk or tel: 01303 854474.

Associate Editor: DANIELA SCHULZE

Articles, cartoons and other contributions for the 'Students' page are most welcome. Send to: Daniela Schulze, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: d.schulze@psyglia.ac.uk.