

Profession lacks mental illness compassion

Dear Editor,

Like Helen Fines (November 5 issue), I am concerned at the lack of compassion shown by the profession in general, and the Royal College in particular, to those experiencing mental illness.

Acute depression is a most terrifying and debilitating experience, requiring expert long-term care and, frequently, a change in the lifestyle of the affected person.

Employers should realise that depression is not a condition that can be cured by a few days off work and some diazepam. Personally, I have found cognitive behavioural therapy to be very useful. Put simply, this is a coping strategy that allows a person to "bale out" from stressful situations before they become threatening. It was pertinent that Ms Fines' letter was followed by that of Joseph Holmes. I believe one of the factors that leads to depression in practising members (especially the younger members) is the ever-present fear of malicious complaints by clients.

Many clients now use the threat of a complaint to the RCVS as a bargaining tool when trying to avoid perfectly legitimate fees. It is incredible to find the college now admits its disciplinary process may be flawed, but yet is still prepared to continue to put members through the process, often accepting ludicrous complaints that would have no chance of success in any legal action – presumably because it feels it must be seen to be fulfilling its statutory obligation. How can those members of the disciplinary committee – individually, fine people – still be party to a system like this when they know the Privy Council had declared that the similar General Dental Council disciplinary system "could not be commended"? It is time to suspend all disciplinary proceedings until the system can be shown to be fair and compliant with the Human Rights Act.

Yours faithfully,

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