



DOING THE ROUNDS

THE legacy of William Waldegrave's absurd waiting list initiative lives on. Surgeons at Bath's Royal United Hospital have been ordered to clear their "over two years" waiting lists for varicose veins and in-growing toenails in preference to removing "urgent" breast lumps (ie proven cancers and highly suspicious growths).

Surgical manager Janet Christopher told irate consultants: "If you don't comply, you'll be fined £16,000... which happens to be the salary of one of your junior doctors." The RUH is so in debt that it has closed three wards and has designs on a fourth.

● **SWINDON** health authority is reviewing its discharge procedures following complaints about the treatment of an elderly woman. She was admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital with abdominal pain and later discharged home alone without support or her family's knowledge.

A diagnosis of terminal cancer was made two weeks later but was overlooked and she was subjected to unnecessary bowel preparation for colonoscopy. The relatives were not informed of the diagnosis for three weeks, shortly before her death. Their complaints took a mere 18 months to be investigated.

● **THE Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton** indulges in the rather dubious habit of videoing all cases of major trauma in its casualty department. Junior doctors are expected to converse with the camera during resuscitation and the tapes, recorded without the patients' or relatives' consent, are supposed to be erased shortly afterwards. However, many are being kept for teaching and medico-legal purposes.

● **THE** sorry state of paediatric cardiac surgery at the **United Bristol Healthcare Trust** (Eye 793, 797) has been confirmed by an internal audit of the last two years' operations. The results of procedures to correct two congenital heart abnormalities (Tetralogy of Fallot and transposition of the arteries) were especially poor.

James Wishart, chairman of the hospital management committee and medical adviser to the trust board, is required to maintain standards of medical practice at UBHT. Curiously he has not felt it necessary to inform the trust board or the trust's purchasers of these findings. Could it be because he is also associate director of cardiac surgery?

Meanwhile UBHT continues to squander its resources in pitiful attempts to buy staff loyalty. Every junior doctor was recently given a brand new leather filofax and Parker pen, complete with the UBHT crest and slogan.

● **WESSEX** regional health authority has announced the wastage of at least £20 million on useless computer projects. Ken Jarrold, regional general manager, said it was hard to say exactly how much of the £42 million "regional information systems plan" (RISP) was worthwhile because fundamental mismanagement makes it impossible to know how much was spent, by whom and for what.

Those responsible for instigating RISP no longer work for Wessex RHA, but their main folly was to farm out the region's computing services to private company coincidentally formed and staffed by ex-Wessex RHA employees. The auditors considered this subverted the interests of the authority "deliberately or otherwise".

Wessex RHA is also heading the national "bail out a fund-holding GP" competition. It has had to give extra funds to each of its 17 impecunious first-wave fundholders totalling £378,300. So far 2 of the country's 14 RHA's have had to top up their practices.

THE department of health has also been forced to bail out the **Wellhouse NHS Trust** (aka "Whithouse Trust", Eye 801), which encompasses

Edgware and Barnet general hospitals and their projected £5.3 million debt. Barnet has shed 84 jobs and is closing three wards including Simpson, a busy acute surgical ward, and the geriatric day hospital. Compulsory redundancies are foremost among the over 50s, many of whom have worked in the hospital for years and were given very little notice. Meanwhile the number of patients waiting more than two years for operations in the North West Thames RHA rose from just two before the election to 155 two months after it.

● **IN NORTHUMBERLAND**, the opening of **Wansbeck Hospital** will be heralded by a specially commissioned song. The £10,000 cost will cover the composer's fee, though many would rather the money was donated to the hospital's CAT scanner appeal. At present, patients have to travel to Newcastle for scans. However, Mr Frank Ward, one of the health chiefs working on the new hospital, insists there is not "a cat in hell's chance" of the money being transferred.

● **SOMERSET'S** hospitals are reaping the rewards of trust status. Both **Yeovil** and **Taunton** are £200,000 overspent just four months into the financial year. Between 1974 and 1986 (before the reforms) the whole of Somerset was well managed to the point that there was never an overspend in any one year. Since taking on the trust mantle, Taunton hospital has squandered £5 million on computer hardware, operators, clerks, information gatherers, patients' charter-minders, facilitators and quality control managers. The management executive has now concluded that "activity within the trust is considerably higher than planned or funded and cannot be allowed to continue unchecked..." They are now refusing to employ bank nurses, leaving some wards dangerously understaffed.

● **IN BRISTOL'S** Southmead NHS Trust, chief executive Philip Chubb has come up with a novel solution to the chronic shortage of medical house-officers (Eyes 797, 800): he's decided to transfer two house surgeons to the medical side as from 1 August 1993. This is likely to precipitate a similar manpower crisis on the surgical side. The director of surgery, Humphrey White M. Chir FRCS, has now joined the director of medicine in resignation.

M.D.

CULT CORNER

THE "church" of scientology is busy spreading the word in the old eastern block. This time the unwitting target is Albania.

The "church", like many big businesses, has been quick to spot a potentially lucrative market beyond the old iron curtain. Having funded a library of journalism in Moscow — not bad for a cult with an impressive record in harassing hacks who write anything other than flattering stories about them — the Hubbardistas now claim the Albanian government is planning to use scientology techniques to run some of its ministries.

Needless to say "church" members in the UK are being urged to stump up cash for this latest exercise, spurred on, no doubt, by the newsletter's liberal sprinkling of L. Ron Hubbardspeak: "The power (defined as light year kilo tons per micro second) of a thetan is measured by nothing else than the distance (defined as spherical spatial length) around him in this environment that he can control."

The once downtrodden, dirt poor peasants will



"Two minutes starting... now! If you're so clever, why are you a Grade XVII(B) Civil servant working for the Inland Revenue?"

no doubt appreciate the arrival of 30,000 copies of *The Way to Happiness* and a consignment of the "Oxford Analysis Capacity", a personality test the cult uses to persuade raw recruits they have problems to which scientology or dianetics are the answer.

O.B.N.

As a local cab driver I recently had the pleasure to convey Lady Olga Maitland.

Despite much adverse criticism I found her to be a most delightful, charming, down to earth lady — a great conversationalist and ready to listen to my point of view.

R. HORRY
Letter in Sutton Borough Guardian

Rupert Murdoch is a genius...

WILLIAM SHAWCROSS
(in his biography of Murdoch)

Submitted by Miss J.M. Lumsden, Jessica Wright.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

UN NEWS

MAURICE STRONG, dapper billionaire head of the United Nations' Rio earth summit, seems to be suffering from inverted hydrophobia: far from having a fear of water, Strong can't keep away from the stuff.

Eye readers will recall his part in the plot to dehydrate the valley he lives in in Arizona and sell the water on to nearby cities.

News now suggests that he has accepted a major appointment with Ontario Hydro, a company that floods valleys in Canada. He has also accepted a job as chief environmental adviser to the UN's development programme, where staff will soon be issued with dowsing rods...

HUSBAND

