

admitted to an institution against his or her will by a judge.

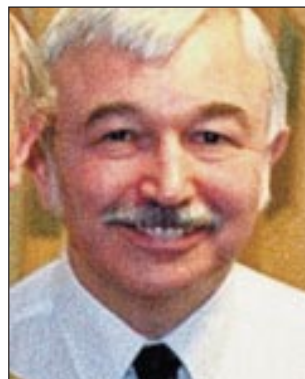
The two psychiatric associations want a judge, an ethics committee, or another statutory body to decide on forced admissions to hospital.

Judy Siegel-Itzkovich *Jerusalem*

GP who was subject of a complaint found dead

A GP who was investigated over the death of a patient has been found dead at the foot of 70 metre high cliffs on the Gower peninsula in south Wales.

The body of Dr Philip Evans, (pictured) aged 52, was discovered following a search 24 hours after he was reported missing. Police said they were not treating the death as suspicious.



BRUNNEN NEWS

The Gowerton GP, who had been in practice for more than 25 years, was involved in an inquiry last year into the death of a patient, Michael Oliver, aged 33, who was diagnosed as having flu but who is understood to have died some time later in hospital of pneumonia.

Mr Oliver's family made a complaint to Iechyd Morgannwg health authority, and a confidential independent inquiry was carried out nine months ago. The results were not disclosed.

In a statement, the health authority said, "He was a well respected doctor who served his community well for many years. We have lost a singular and dedicated GP. It is truly a tragedy."

Rory Dobson *Abergavenny*

Beware online therapy, counselling association warns

People using the internet to access a therapist are being warned to take precautions to protect themselves against fraudulent practitioners.

Guidelines from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy this month recommend that anyone considering internet counselling should ensure that the therapist is suitably trained and supervised and that they understand the contract they are agreeing to and the limitations of the service they are receiving.

Zosia Kmietowicz *London*

The guidelines are available from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ (tel 0870 443 5252; bacp@bacp.co.uk), price £7.

Arguments delay setting up of European food agency

Policymakers have only six months to break the deadlock over the remit and location of an influential new European agency if plans to strengthen the safety of food eaten in the 15 member union are to be in place next year as scheduled.

MEPs last week overwhelmingly backed the creation of a European Food Authority that would provide scientific risk assessment and advise EU and national institutions on a high level of human health protection.

There are differences over the size of and appointment procedures for the authority's management board and where it should be located. Several EU countries—including Finland, Italy, and Spain—are bidding to host the new agency. Not only is it seen as a prestigious prize, but it will also act as a magnet for other food research activities.

Rory Watson *Brussels*

Cancer survival rates continue to rise in the Netherlands

Tony Sheldon *Utrecht*

Survival rates for patients with cancer continued to improve substantially throughout the 1990s despite expectations that they would level off, according to a Dutch study analysing cancer registration data since the 1950s.

The Comprehensive Cancer Centre South, in Eindhoven, has data on 200 000 patients with cancer dating back 45 years covering the south east of the Netherlands. The data show a strong trend of increasing survival rates at five years compared with both the 1960s and the 1980s.

Patients aged 15-44 years had a 73% chance of surviving five years in the 1990s, compared with 55% in the 1970s. Patients aged 45-69 and 70-89 also showed a trend towards better five year survival, with their chances improving from 40% to 55% and from 34% to 49% respectively.

The researchers argue that the data provide hard proof of a continuing trend for patients with cancer to live longer despite scepticism that there were few further improvements to be made.

Dr Jan-Willem Coebergh, associate professor in cancer epidemiology at Rotterdam's Erasmus University, who led the research, said that the trends were even stronger than he had expected. Earlier detection and better treatment since the 1980s were important factors.

He said: "We have detailed analysis of how patients have benefited from major improvements in surgery for treating cancer of the bowel and rectum together with improved preop-

erative radiotherapy."

The trend was also influenced by earlier detection, especially of prostate cancer by general practitioners and urologists. Patients with breast cancer have benefited from better screening and treatment.

Survival rates at five years for breast and prostate cancer have risen steadily in the past 25 years, from about 60% to about 80%; survival for cancer of the colon and rectum have also improved, from about 40% to 60%. Survival rates among patients with Hodgkin's disease and cancer of the testis have also improved markedly.

The only exception is skin cancer among men older than 60, in whom survival rates at five years have fallen slightly from more than 60% in the late 1980s. Researchers believe this could be due to older men not coming forward for diagnosis early enough.

But Professor Coebergh warned that the research also had a downside. There are now 375 000 Dutch patients who have or have had cancer, and the figure is increasing at 5% a year. This will place heavy demands on services, especially complex, rehabilitation services for elderly patients. Meanwhile longer waiting lists could result in a slowing down of the trend towards earlier diagnosis. □

Cancer Incidence and Survival in the Southeast of the Netherlands 1955-1999 is available from Integraal Kankercentrum Zuid (IKZ), Comprehensive Cancer Centre South, PO Box 231, 5600 TE Eindhoven, Netherlands (ikz@ikz.nl).

