

See: "Education in a Special Hospital" - Author Brian Bennett. B.J.M.S., 1991, 112-114

The Editor  
British Journal of Mental Subnormality

Rampton Hospital  
Nottinghamshire  
November 18th, 1991

Dear Sir,

A short while ago I had brought to my attention the review, written by H. C. Gunzburg, of Brian Bennett's book "Education in a Special Hospital" that appeared in the July edition of your Journal. I thought this review presented a false picture of Rampton Hospital and therefore needed to be commented on.

When not specifically referring to the book I considered the comments to be judgemental, such as describing Rampton Hospital as "prison like" and having a "prison environment". It inferred that Rampton Hospital carried out principally a custodial function saying "they have to be kept out of circulation for considerable lengths of time". This statement fails to identify the principle aim of the hospital which is to treat and rehabilitate people in order for them to return safely to the community at the earliest and most appropriate time. A further inaccurate statement relates to the length of time people might expect to spend in Rampton Hospital and this is not "at least 4 or 5 years" with some patients moving on in much shorter periods, even some within a few months.

Although the reviewer confirms that staff are health professionals he uses quotation marks around the word "nurse", suggesting that this is not truly what they are. In addition it is untrue to say that the nurses' first duty is to security. Whilst this is an important aspect of care, the first duty is to provide the best treatment possible within a secure environment. The use of words such as "oppressive" paint an inaccurate and misleading picture of the hospital and whilst security clearly influences treatment for some patients it allows them, often for the first time, to receive prolonged and effective treatment.

Much of the review seems to consist of a description of Rampton Hospital rather than a comment on the book per se. This may be valid if it were an accurate non-judgemental description of the hospital, but it is not. I do not know when the reviewer last visited Rampton Hospital and my

only comment is that it is not a picture of the hospital that I have been associated with, in various capacities, over the last 9 years. Rampton Hospital provides a high quality of care for its patient population and the adverse, inaccurate, judgemental comments of the reviewer do not do proper justice to Brian Bennett's excellent work and publication.

I would ask you to consider publishing this letter not only to act as a counter to the picture painted in your review but to act as a focus of debate as to the role, function and environment at Rampton Hospital.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. I. A. P. Keitch  
Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist  
Director of Medical Services