British paediatrics

Training for terminal cancer care

The Standing Intercollegiate Committee on Oncology, on which the British Paediatric Association (BPA) is represented, has produced a report on 'Professional Recognition of Training in Terminal Care of Cancer Patients.' The committee considers that the development over the last decade of units or hospices for terminal cancer care has highlighted the need for special training in this field of medical work and hence for training standards to be established. It is recommended that an intercollegiate body be set up for this purpose and that training schemes should allow for entry from the ranks of consultants or general practitioners approaching the end of their careers as well as being open to accredited senior registrars in relevant specialties and trained general practitioners.

The report does not refer to children with cancer or to training in paediatrics but the BPA was invited to comment and has firmly stated its view that terminal care for children with cancer should be provided by the same clinicians and supporting staff who cared for them in the earlier stages of their disease. On the whole this care is given at home by the general practitioner in close cooperation with the hospital oncology team; occasionally terminal care is provided in hospital. The BPA considers that hospice care for children with cancer is nearly always inappropriate and should not be needed. Training in terminal care should be part of the training of paediatric oncologists and indeed of all paediatricians.