

Correspondence

Dear Editor,

Nurse–patient interaction in a token economy. *Behavioural Psychotherapy* 1983, 11, 225–234.

In this article Rezin and her colleagues investigated the effects on nurse–patient interaction, of giving contingent *vs.* non-contingent tokens to long-stay patients. They found that when staff gave contingent tokens this increased the amount of their social interactions with patients also. They quote our research as contradictory (Baker and Hall, 1975); we found no difference in nurse–patient social interaction between two similar groups. I do not wish to argue with the validity of Rezin’s findings, but to point out an important difference between the two studies, which I think accounts for the discrepancy.

In Rezin’s study nurse–patient social interaction was a dependent variable, whereas in our study it was a controlled variable. The entire staff had it drummed into them as the first law of the universe that whatever they did to the contingent token group they *MUST* do to the non-contingent group also, except of course for the token contingency. We gave the staff instructions and demonstration in how to give the same amount and quality of social interaction to both groups as part of the pre-experimental training. Also, we regularly discussed the tightness of our control procedures with staff throughout the experiment, becoming obsessively concerned with how we might balance this or that factor between the two groups. We were not very surprised, therefore, to find no significant difference between the two groups in the amount of nurse–patient social interaction.

P.S. If anyone has a cure for obsessional checking of experimental procedures, could they please write to me using a plain brown envelope.

Dr Roger Baker
Research Principal Psychologist
Royal Cornhill Hospital, Aberdeen