

this had been so, then the four-month delay before the investigations were carried out could have been detrimental. Investigation for an organic cause for mental illness is important to allow appropriate management. Just as patients do not understand or consent to treatment, they may also misunderstand or be frightened by investigations.

It is surprising that this point regarding investigations did not occur during the drafting of the Act or subsequently, but this patient and the difficulties and delays encountered exemplify the need for clarification on the point. Possibly the issue of investigations could be dealt with in the same manner as treatment presently is under the Act, and be administered by the nominated Commissioners.

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#### Reference

BLUGLASS, R. (1984). The origins of the Mental Health Act 1983 – doctors in the house. *The Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists*, **8**, 127–134.

#### CORRIGENDUM

*Journal*, August 1987, **151**, 160–165 (Wig *et al*). The names of Jørgen Achton Nielsen and Grethe Thestrup, from the Aarhus Psychiatric Hospital, Risskov, Denmark, should be added to the list of authors.

#### A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

##### Lunacy regulations in France

In consequence of certain irregularities revealed by the investigations into the case of Baron Seillières, who, it was alleged, was improperly detained in a lunatic asylum near Paris after he recovered his mental equilibrium, the Minister of the Interior, M. Fallières, has issued a circular to all prefects directing them rigidly to obey the enactment which requires them to make periodical visits to all asylums, public or private, within their jurisdiction. It is directed that these visits should be paid unexpectedly, and not less

frequently than once a quarter; that patients who desire to leave the asylum should be interviewed, and in every doubtful case subsequently subjected to a special medical inquiry; that the use of the shower-bath as a punishment should be forbidden; that the period of observation should be reduced to the shortest possible time; and that frequent transfers from one establishment to another should be discouraged.

#### Reference

*The British Medical Journal*, 13 August 1887, 368.