Ten years ago, psychiatrists rated black male patients as potentially more violent than white patients. 1 We aimed to establish whether such racial stereotyping still occurs.

Participants, methods, and results

We sent a postal questionnaire concerning the first presentation of a young man at casualty—which occurred.

In order to manage issues by putting a cross on a 10 cm continuous line. For each question, mean scores for “black” and “white” questionnaires were compared using the Mann-Whitney U test (table). Of the 823 psychiatrists who could be contacted, 599 (n = 485)—equivalent to 10% of British psychiatrists—returned completed questionnaires. Forty eight per cent (232) had received a “black” questionnaire. Fourteen respondents, who had all received a questionnaire with a photograph of a black man, guessed the hypothesis; six completed the questionnaire and were included in the analyses. Five others returned questionnaires uncompleted. Prior power calculations, based on expected mean (SD) risks of violence of 2.41 (1.76) 2.87 (1.53), 3 gave the study 85% power at the 5% level.

Psychiatrists indicated that they were more likely to ask black patients whether they had a social worker or had received learning support at school, whereas they were more likely to ask white patients about problem drinking. They were equally likely to ask a black patient or a white patient if they had a criminal record or had recently used illegal drugs. Psychiatrists thought it would be more difficult to build a rapport with white patients, that white patients would be more of a management problem, and that they were more likely to pose a risk of violence to others. There were no significant differences regarding risk to self, the need for

Racial stereotyping: survey of psychiatrists in the United Kingdom

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Photographs that accompanied the questionnaire can be seen on the BMJ's website

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one hundred years ago

Nurses for the middle classes

A correspondent writing to us on the occasion of the presentation of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Nurses, remarks that "the whole scheme of nursing appears to have been developed to the advantage of two classes, the very rich and the very poor," and goes on to point out the difficulty of meeting the nursing needs of the middle classes on the same lines as those of the poor. The nurse's fee of five guineas a week, though it sounds high, is only sufficient to keep her during her short period of earning, and leaves very little for old age or sickness.

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One hundred years ago

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