

Letters

Correspondence is welcome on any topic of professional interest. The editor points out, however, that the views expressed on this page are not necessarily endorsed by the journal. Readers' letters should be exclusive to this journal and should not be submitted elsewhere.

to the Editor

Manpower in optics . . .

Sir—Immediately following publication of our report on optometry manpower in *The Ophthalmic Optician* of June 18 an item appeared in the *Observer* newspaper reporting that since the General Election the Government had decided to no longer fine universities that exceed their targets for home students and to allow them to keep the £480 in fees that each extra student brings (a story that the UGC later described as fabricated and the DES as being 'without foundation'). It is possible that we will see some institutes acceding to financial and other pressures and admitting more students, even though Government will not be providing any additional funding for these via the UGC. Whether this will see a significant increase in our median prediction of 225 new home registrations p.a. from 1987 will also depend upon the validity of our prediction of a future 5 to 10 per cent wastage rate for optometry training.

In our article we commented upon the employment prospects of medical doctors and the future number of OMPs, but did not look in detail at the role of the dispensing opticians. In the past the number of DOs enquiring about the ophthalmic optics course at UMIST has caused us concern, and we have wondered whether too many are being trained. The GOC publishes annual figures for those registering but there appears to be no published information on the numbers being admitted to and taking part in training. Consequently we cannot predict future numbers of dispensing opticians, a matter of considerable interest to OOs and DOs alike. Is there an employment problem amongst dispensers or is their manpower self-regulating — a matter of supply and demand as we have sometimes been told? We would like to know more about recruitment policies in this area.

Finally, may we clarify a small point which may have misled some readers. Although the first UK ophthalmic optics degree students were admitted in October 1964, the first degrees were awarded in June 1966 by Aston University after a retrospective change in the status of their Diploma in Technology course.—CHRIS FRENCH and DON LORAN, *Ophthalmic Optics Department, UMIST*.