

Letters

To the Editors:

Some problems at the General Hospital, Jaffna

Ceylon Medical Journal, 2000; 45: 140

I read with interest the letter from Dr. S A S Goonewardene in your June issue regarding shackled patients (*Ceylon Medical Journal* 2000; 45: 87). I fully endorse his views, and appreciate the brave and wholly justifiable stand taken by him.

Here in Jaffna it is a problem that we encounter from time to time and have to confront. However, there are other problems which are more difficult to resolve. When "dangerous" prisoners are admitted, armed guards sit beside their beds in the wards and sometimes even in the ICU! Armed personnel also traverse the hospital regularly, and even come to clinics as patients with weapons. Since accidents can happen, this is unsafe, and disquieting to both

patients and staff. When objections are raised medical staff can have their motives called into question.

Another equally important issue is the presence of an army camp alongside the hospital, and the close proximity to us of artillery positions. Particularly after the events in May, the staff feel unsafe in such a situation. Even in a conflict situation there should be some norms by which medical institutions should be respected. It is difficult enough for medical personnel to do their work without having these other problems to confront. Our only hope is that the ICRC will be successful in persuading both parties to establish a "Safety Zone" around the hospital, and thus restore confidence of patients and staff.

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