

Reviews

Best wishes for a birthday

Psychological Medicine, Volume 20, February 1990

It is 20 years since Professor Michael Shepherd started his own journal *PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE*, a quarterly for research in Psychiatry and the Allied Sciences. It was a bold thing to do, without the membership of any society to support it or any great concessions to popular medical appeal. How would it find a readership? Indeed in its first five years it did not, and the British Medical Association, its original publisher, decided to shed it. Fortunately the Cambridge University Press came to the rescue, and from 1976 has issued it with mounting success. It needed more time to establish itself, but part of the happy outcome may be due to the new publisher's superior salesmanship. Professor Shepherd was able to draw for original papers on two productive research units based in the Institute of Psychiatry and Maudsley Hospital (London). Academics and research workers round the world who wanted to keep in touch with all the work of Shepherd's own General Practice Research Unit and Professor Wing's MRC Social Psychiatry Unit needed regular access to *Psychological Medicine*.

In addition the new journal published research from other parts of the Maudsley. Of the total of 65 papers published in 1976, 20 were by Maudsley authors, and 30 from the rest of Britain. When the journal got bigger – it had 83 papers in 1982 and 88 in 1988 – the numbers of Maudsley and British papers remained constant (21 and 29 respectively in 1982 and 23 and 30 in 1988). The increase in size was due to a doubling of the number of American contributions, and the appearance of a few from Australasia and Asia, signs the journal was getting widely known. But Maudsley has continued to account for a quarter of the papers published, and so far for most of the monograph supplements published about twice a year.

As for subject matter, a rough classification suggests that while in 1976 no less than 14 were on biochemical and pharmacological topics and 18 on social and epidemiological psychiatry, by 1988 there was a shift to 5 and 32 respectively. The journal was never one to offer guidance on everyday practice, whether diagnostic problem or therapeutic trial, and was no friend to the empathetic and intuitional psychodynamic approach of the followers of Freud and Jung. Nor did it offer correspondence columns

for criticism and debate. It stood for measurement, rating scales, statistical analysis, observation by CT scan or other technology, and precise logical thinking and literary expression. It expected a high standard of clinical and experimental work, and clear careful reporting. It was prepared to publish negative results, provided they were well achieved and an object lesson in how to work; but less willing to accept papers flawed in experimental design and expression but containing significant novelty. Its expectations have certainly pushed authors' standards up.

It has been able to publish original work over a wide range of interests. A typical issue contains 'Food craving, Mood, and the Menstrual cycle', 'Depression and Anxiety in Unemployed men', 'Depression in Torticollis: a controlled study', 'Abnormal illness behaviour in upper abdominal pain', and 'Cerebral blood flow and metabolism of oxygen and glucose in young autistic adults' among its 21 papers. In addition each issue has characteristically contained one paper on the history or philosophy of some part of psychiatry; for example, 'Mediaeval Visions and contemporary hallucinations', 'The early development of Kraepelin's ideas on classification', or 'Henry Maudsley: psychiatrist, philosopher and entrepreneur'. The editor has been quite prepared to re-publish articles which have already appeared elsewhere ('Henry Maudsley' is one such) to offer his readers important subjects.

Original research papers aside, each issue has contained three or four commissioned editorials, first-class brief reviews and reappraisals of a wide variety of subjects: 'Cerebral mechanisms of mood and behaviour', the neuropathology of schizophrenia, 'the outcome of anorexia nervosa', 'the benzodiazepines' and so on. If these had been collected every two or three years and reprinted as a cheap paperback they would have sold like hot cakes to trainees and many consultants. But retained within the pages of a scientific journal which now costs the individual £29 an issue, or £57 a year, they have probably had a smaller readership than they deserved. Perhaps there is still a place for reprinting in one or more books some wider selection from the journal's pages.

The other component of each issue has been book reviews. Some journals ignore books altogether, others simply list a selection of what they have

received from publishers, yet others offer short individual articles on a number. There is the big essay review and the series of short notices. How much precious space should be given up to books, and what is of most use to readers? *Psychological Medicine* allows about ten pages a time, and compromises with a book list, a few short essay reviews, and a number of snappy characteristic sharply critical brief notices which are entertaining but not always very useful. Crowds of books are published or re-issued each year; do we need a firm guide through the crush so that we can all track our special interests?

Every successful periodical, whether literary, political or scientific reflects its editor's taste and outlook: it is his/her creation by selection and encouragement. Professor Shepherd's creation is a towering achievement. It has impressed his psychiatric outlook on thought, research and academic practice internationally for 20 years. In England, 21 used to be the age of full adulthood. In its young maturity may his journal go from strength to strength.

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Medical Aspects of Torture.

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Organised state violence including torture constitutes one of the largest preventable causes of physical and psychological morbidity in the modern world. Amnesty International estimates that about one in three world governments have used torture systematically in the 1980s. Millions have been killed and many more have had to leave their countries in search of refuge.

The Danish Medical Group of Amnesty International, later the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims (RCT), has had an important influence in the world medical response to this issue. Coming from an Amnesty back-

ground, the group has led in human rights work. It is disappointing, however, that despite this promising beginning its contribution to the development of psychological and psychosomatic understandings in survivors of torture has not been greater.

This supplement to the *Danish Medical Bulletin* is devoted to an English language presentation of the results of investigation of 200 torture survivors seen between 1975 and 1982. Some of these results have already been published elsewhere. Most of the sections are detailed descriptions of different physical injuries resulting from torture. Psychological symptoms reported at the time of torture and at subsequent examination are dealt with more briefly. They were common with about two-thirds having long lasting psychological sequelae, chiefly sleep disturbance, irritability, anxiety and depression. Later sections include discussions of the participation of doctors in torture and the role of the medical profession in the prevention of torture.

It is vitally important that doctors and other health professionals are informed about the horrors of organised state violence including torture. It is, after all, inconceivable that torture could take place in any community without the knowledge of health professionals. For those of us in countries of safety and freedom, it is important not only to be able to help the survivors of torture seeking asylum, but also to support the work of colleagues working in great personal danger elsewhere. Any publication which raises awareness of the subject should be welcomed. However, this long article leaves me with a sense of disappointment, a wish that with this large body of data, new insights could have been developed and new interests awakened. The journal will certainly be of relevance as a valuable reference for those who work in the field, but is unlikely to attract a wide readership elsewhere.

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