

Cassel Hospital Jubilee Conference

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This meeting, which took place at the end of July 1980, was agreed to be decidedly successful by all participants. The overall subject, 'Psychoanalysis in the study of health care', proved sufficiently broad to allow a wide variety of papers on related subjects to be assembled, and to provide a framework by which their relevance to each other could be perceived.

The organizers had three aims. First, to celebrate the achievements of the hospital after 60 years' development. Next, to reaffirm their conviction that the central ideals embodied in the hospital structure and work are as important now as they ever were; these principles being: respect for the patient's individuality, challenge to his capacity to accept responsibility, integration of formal psychotherapeutic with practical and social remedial work, and reliance on interpersonal means of rehabilitation rather than chemotherapy for the treatment of severely neurotic and borderline patients. And thirdly, to stimulate interest in plans to find alternative finance to support and extend teaching and research.

The 52 papers read were either clinical or about training or research. Twenty presentations were given by hospital staff, eleven by ex-staff, seventeen by other British workers and four by overseas speakers. A film about the hospital's work was shown during the week and an exhibition of photographs summarised its development. Countess Mountbatten continued her family's support and interest by attending and giving a spirited and thoughtful address on the Hospital's continuing significance in the field.

Alan Wilson, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, opened the Conference and Tom Main reviewed the Hospital's history and development, especially the elaboration of the therapeutic community concept.

The work of the Hospital since its beginnings in 1920 has been the treatment of more severe neuroses and borderline mental disturbances, and some more tractable forms of psychosis. Among the different aspects of mental health care that have become particularly relevant are the nature and techniques of psychotherapy; the optimum conditions needed for such (the therapeutic community); the relevance of family structure; the need to involve families in treatment, especially with children and adolescents; the relationship between mental treatment, and that of emotional disturbance in physical illness; the treatment of mental disturbance in general practice; roles of management, administration and institutional structure in psychotherapy; relationships be-

tween different groups of mental health workers, e.g. nurses and doctors; training of workers in these fields, e.g. the establishment of a training school in psychosocial nursing and the extension of training to related fields (social work, general practice); research and experimentation in all these areas. This very wide range of related subjects was reflected in the scope of the presentations.

A central issue was the connection between formal psychological or 'talking' treatment done by psychotherapists and practical behavioural and 'doing' treatment done by nurses and others. Considerable sophistication about the complementarity of these two aspects and of their need for integration by an appropriate hospital structure has been developed at the Cassel.

These theoretical aspects were discussed by Otto Kernberg, Paul Wachtel and Elliot Jaques. Desmond Pond and Sir Denis Hill stressed the importance of psychotherapy in the training of psychiatrists. Other aspects of training, in group psychotherapy for instance (Malcolm Pines), were covered. There were some very good clinical papers, including individual work with children, adolescents, families and single adults. Particularly good papers by Peter Hildebrand and John Steiner discussed work with old people and borderline cases respectively. A paper and seminar on nursing work was given by Baroness McFarlane and supported by clinical presentations by hospital nurses. Finally there were research papers on studies taking place inside and beyond the hospital.

An evening reception at the hospital was an elegant and friendly event, and the Conference dinner was attended by Dr Gerard Vaughan who cheered us with reassurance concerning the hospital's future.

This Conference more clearly defined an area of applied psychoanalysis in which workers have much need to share. Those in the field know how important the work is, and of the difficulties people with severe neurotic illness and their families have in getting effective treatment. They also know how easily it comes under threat in hard economic times and how much it needs and deserves defending. It is also difficult and often discouraging work, and those who are in it need support and encouragement. This Conference made a significant contribution to all of those needs.

The proceedings will be published, and sound recordings of individual papers will be made available. Further information about these is obtainable from the Hospital Secretary.