

OF CHANGE, RESEARCH, AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Welcome again to our biannual international Conference!

This Biannual Conference has grown to cover contributions across the World - From Australia and India to the Middle East and the USA. It also has developed in many ways, to cover at One End Immunology and Molecular Psychiatry through to Neuroimaging and Brain Stimulation, to Clinical audit of Community Care Teams, to Philosophy of Psychiatry and the relationship of Psychiatry to the Humanities and to the Human Person Itself. Nor has the teaching of Psychiatry been neglected, indeed a whole symposium is devoted to this subject. One peculiarity of Psychiatry is that all of these subjects and more fall within the compass of helping make our patients better, nor can we ignore any of the many facets that we shall discuss.

It is not possible, even if we have the best knowledge of Immunology, Epigenetics, or Molecular Biology, to enable our patients to recover unless we have adequately functioning community teams and Hospitals, but also, most of all, unless we are able to treat our patients with humanity and to communicate with them properly. Without this, our work is doomed to failure from the start. Hence this conference aims to bring the complex science into direct contact with the Human Person in all its many and precious aspects.

Another characteristic and objective of this conference is to bring 'Big Research', led as it is by 'Big Academic Names' into contact with the 'small' clinical researchers, and also the Medical Students, some of whom have just started research for the first time. It is for these reasons that we promote the work of individual researchers, who are doing the most valuable work in Medicine; observing what is going on in their practice and reporting on it. One paper, from a rural part of England, reports that the Author's Community team dealt with 300 patients. That alone is a very important finding, simply because I can recall that the team in which I practiced dealt with about 700 patients. Thence disparities in the services within the same country become apparent, and can be discussed. If such reports are ignored because certain statistical criteria are not met, then we find that we cannot compare services and thence we cannot plan to improve them.

Hence this conference wishes to see all our colleagues as equal, accepting that those who do pure science and those who simply record clinical observations as they see them all have valid contributions to make, even if those contributions might be of a different nature.

Most importantly, this conference welcomes the first research attempts of Medical Students from All over Europe who are making their first steps in Research, and therefore the papers by students are particularly welcome both in the Student's International Competition and in the Proceedings of the Conference, which are kindly published by 'Psychiatria Danubina'.

Furthermore, this conference stands against attempts to challenge by force the primary importance of the Human Person. Hence we are delighted to be able to publish two papers from Mosul, that embattled City which has so recently and at such great cost been reclaimed into the fold of Civilisation and had been liberated from militant bigotry. We salute that city and all who stand for the fundamental values of the Human Person.

All of this makes for a hugely varied conference with a huge number of papers which vary in subject, content, quality and purpose, but all our contributors need to be equally congratulated and encouraged. Only thus will psychiatry move forward and will it continue to develop as a service which helps and supports people.

We hope you enjoy the conference!

Mark Agius, MD

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