

Everyone is tightening his criteria for the type of patient he (or she) sees as belonging to his workload. This, in my experience, is true of geriatric medicine. Also, general hospitals are transferring back patients to psychiatric hospitals with indecent haste. In Ireland, money and junior staff are scarce commodities. One major area which hasn't been able to say no is the oft' maligned asylum. Psychiatric hospitals struggle on gallantly with diminishing resources to supply a service. Unfortunately, unless public perceptions change, the admission of any dementing patient to a psychiatric institution will remain a time for grieving.

BRIAN O'SHEA

*Consultant Psychiatrist  
Newcastle Hospital  
Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland*

#### References

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**CONTEXT Magazine.** The Association for Family Therapy, Child and Family Consultation Service, 51 London Road, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8LF.

*Context* is the new snappy format for the newsletter of the Association for Family Therapy. It is meant to reach a wider audience than previously and it is hoped it will have a separate life of its own from the parental authority of the *Journal of Family Therapy*.

The editorial team set themselves a heavy and daunting agenda: "But this is not the *whole* story. People are attracted to family systems ideas because it is an exciting way to psychologise, to share creatively in human problem definition and problem solving; to complement psychodynamic, behavioural

or strategic methods with a conceptual language that prevents or reduces the confusions and distortions between the various helping disciplines and the professions. It is indeed a map for negotiating the vast, impersonal social/political edifices humans create for their wellbeing and then become alienated from yet imprisoned within. It focuses directly on that divinely crazy institution the family". Seasoned readers will recognise the institutional language of the systems family therapist emerging at various points in the editorial and elsewhere in the journal. However the writers have insight and comment on the move from the inward looking old newsletter towards the outgoing new magazine. They quote Arthur Koestler characterising the magazine as "holonistic" meaning "an entity at an intermediate level in a hierarchy which can be described as a whole or a part depending on the way it is looked at".

By the time I had read this far in the journal I was fearful that the whole project might grind to a halt by carrying such a weight of ideological baggage. However the magazine is a pleasant surprise. There are helpful articles on how to write papers, a lucid review by David Will on 'feminism, child sexual abuse, and the demise of systems mysticism', and thoughtful contributions on the UK Standing Conference for Psychotherapy as well as the expected information on forthcoming courses and reviews of conferences.

Taking the magazine as a whole rather than its parts, I think it succeeds in its task in that it revived my interest in some of the ways in which systems thinking can cast a new eye on well worn topics. I think it will attract people through its new design without alienating existing members who need an informal forum. Whether the magazine will stand on its own as a publication to be purchased by non members of the Association of Family Therapists I doubt. However I was impressed by the thought and application that had gone into the new venture and I would recommend trainees and established psychiatrists at least to cast an eye on this new offering.

F. R. MARGISON

*Consultant Psychotherapist  
Department of Psychiatry  
Gaskell House, Manchester M13 0EW*