

the needs of people in crisis and how local services could go about meeting them in order to avoid the trauma of admission at all. Lastly, and as the authors admit, there seems to have been little prior thought given to the integration of the meeting into a process of service development that might ensure that the views expressed resulted in improvements. Listening to people is only a first step. Action needs to follow to ensure that services change for the better.

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Scientific American. September 1992, volume 267, Special issue: 'Mind and Brain'. Scientific American, Inc., 415 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA.

A traditional view of neurophysiology was that the faculties of sensing and understanding were quite separate. In the visual system, for example, signals were thought to be relayed from the retina to the visual cortex, then to the various association areas, and finally brought together to be 'comprehended' in some master theatre. The problem for neurophysiologists was that, the closer they examined the brain, the more it came to resemble a collection of association cortexes with no master theatre: a lot of little engines, and no Fat Controller.

Within the past two decades, the beginnings of a solution to this problem (the missing Fat Controller) have emerged. The hypothesis is as yet tentative, but it has profound implications for our understanding of brain and mind. This special edition of *Scientific American*, 'Mind and Brain', brings together researchers from neurobiology and cognitive science in an attempt to introduce these ideas to a general readership. All of the authors are exceptionally well-known, and each has made an impressive contribution to his or her own discipline.

The format works well. There are chapters on neurodevelopment, the visual image, learning, language, memory, sex differences, mental illness, ageing, neural networks, and consciousness. Although each contribution can be read in isolation from the whole, the editors have clearly intended readers to work their way through systematically, as there are recurring themes which are gradually developed. One of the main themes is that of multi-stage integration of perceptual information. The cerebral cortex displays an extraordinary degree of functional specialisation, but there is no master area to which sensory information converges. Instead, the integration of information is a process in which perception and comprehension occur simultaneously. Evidence for this model is presented, and the implications discussed. There are obvious parallels with

the theory of consciousness recently put forward by Daniel Dennett (1992).

The chapters on the developing brain and the visual system are particularly good; the chapter on mental illness is the one weak point. In truth, there is more about 'brain' than 'mind' in this volume, and some readers may feel that the title is misleading. The whole is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs and colour graphics, and the general quality of the production is excellent. At \$4.95, it provides good background reading in neurobiology.

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References

DENNETT, D.C. (1992) *Consciousness Explained*. London: Allen Lane.

1991 Annual Report and Journal on Torture.

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, Juliane Marie Vej 34, DK-2100 Copenhagen 0, Denmark.

The Danish Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims (RCT) has been a leading agency in the development of a medical and rehabilitation response to survivors of torture.

The Annual Report for 1991 (in English and Danish) well illustrates the range of its activities, its clinical work, its publications and its international activities (through the newly formed International Council, IRTC). I will focus on two of these, a new Journal (*Torture*) and the international setting.

Torture (now in its second volume) is a free, English-language, quarterly journal, which provides an opportunity for professionals and torture survivors to describe and share their experiences of work in this field. It has prestigious backers; the most recent issue starts with a paper on medical ethics and the activities of the Danish Medical Association by its president and continues with contributions from Uruguay, France, Netherlands, USA, Pakistan, Germany, Estonia, UK, Philippines, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Spain and South Africa as well as a series of conference summaries and international reports from Amnesty International. The journal is anecdotal and descriptive rather than scientific but has interest nonetheless and clearly has scope for further development.

The international setting is rather more complex. The group has been active in sponsoring treatment centres in other countries. The Annual Report includes a description of the establishment of the Al-Riggae Centre in Kuwait following the Iraqi withdrawal from that country. At present rates of

attendance, the centre is expected to receive 1000 clients in its first year. Activities such as this are laudable although it remains a sad truth that there are persistent tensions between agencies and international organisations which stand only to harm this work. Torture, organised state violence, enforced exile and displacement are all too common, affecting millions of people in the modern world. There is an urgent need for the limited resources available to be used cooperatively to best advantage. Failure to do this only serves to support the damage of the torturer. We must all learn to work together more effectively and in this spirit the activities of RCT are very welcome.

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Pyramids of Light and Other Stories – The Arts and Mental Health. By Lee Corner. 1992. Pp 64. £5.00 (including postage). Available from Sam Perkins, Planning & Communications Unit, Yorkshire & Humberside Arts, 21 Bond Street, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF13 1AX.

What can mental health care learn from the arts? This publication attempts not only to answer the question but also to show the positive impact each may have on the other.

The author illustrates that art, in all forms, through its immediacy can enrich patients by:

improving self confidence, developing new skills, acting as a vehicle through which they may articulate the meaning of their lives, but perhaps most importantly by simply providing a pleasurable experience. Equally mental health care settings are places where, increasingly, artists wish to work, finding they offer considerable professional fulfilment.

Overall the booklet provides an excellent combination of the descriptive (examining work currently taking place) and the practical (how to set up a project in a mental health setting). The author entertains, as she informs, describing a diversity of projects ranging from a novel form of dance – Jabadaoing, to Batiq and Buns. The work described comes predominantly from Yorkshire and Humberside with a project study from New York comparing American practices with those in the United Kingdom. Several chapters give good advice on organising and arranging projects including the importance of seeking funding, accurate costings, evaluation and estimating time scales. Extremely useful Appendices of publications in the field and addresses of relevant organisations are provided.

Increasing interest in the role of art in mental health care makes this booklet timely. Although designed primarily for NHS managers it provides a well laid out readable guide for all professionals wishing to involve themselves in this field.

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Psychiatric Bulletin (1993), 17, 191–192

Forthcoming events

Epidemiology in Psychiatry and Mental Health: new international perspectives, Congress of the International Federation of Psychiatric Epidemiology, will be held in Lisbon from 14–17 April 1993. Further information: Secretariat, Uniturismo, Amoreiras Shopping Center, Lojas 2031/2, 1000 Lisboa, Portugal (telephone 351 1 69 04 94; fax 351 1 388 63 69).

2nd National Conference on Mental Health Aspects of AIDS will be held at the University of York on 25 March 1993. Further information: Conference Secretariat, National Forum for Mental Health, PO Box B135, Huddersfield HD1 1YG (telephone 0484 548693; 2–5 pm).

A one day multidisciplinary conference **Suicide & the Murderous Self: understanding self harm as a prelude to effective intervention** will be held in the Monckton Postgraduate Suite, St George's Hospital on 19 March 1993. Further information: Philippa Weitz, The Conference Unit, Department of Mental Health Sciences, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE (telephone 081 672 9944, extension 55534).

The Collegium Internationale Neuro-Psychopharmacologicum (CINP) will be holding two workshops: **Recent Advances in the Treatment of Neurodegenerative Disorders and Cognitive Dysfunction** in Capri, Italy from 1–3 May 1993 and **Current**