

disturbed wards to contain (and conceal) any of the chronically mentally ill. By 1980, therefore, the generation of potential new long-stay patients was particularly visible in Oxford and the service described above was created. As its primary aim is to prevent patients becoming long-stay and institutionalised the term "young adult chronic patient" was borrowed from the United States, rephrased as the "young adult chronically mentally ill".

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Conference Report

International Symposium on Dermatology and Psychiatry, Vienna, 1987

An International Symposium on Dermatology and Psychiatry was held in Vienna from 29 May to 2 June 1987 under the auspices of the Association of European Psychiatrists and hosted by the Psychiatric University Clinic in Vienna. The organisation was largely the inspiration of Professor Peter Berner, Head of the University of Vienna Department of Psychiatry and of Dr John Cotterill, consultant dermatologist, the General Infirmary at Leeds. The symposium was a pioneering effort but proved very successful, and approximately 100 papers were presented.

The topics were wide-ranging and reflected the many points of contact between psychiatry and dermatology. On the first day there were presentations on infestational delusions, alopecia, urticaria and eczema, and on the second day we heard about factitious skin disorders, psoriasis, tattooing, hypochondriasis, dysmorphophobia and AIDS. A number of papers reviewed aspects of consultation-liaison psychiatry and reflected a clear desire by dermatologists for sound, commonsense psychiatric opinions on a significant proportion of their cases.

The principal language was English, but papers were also given in German and French. On the whole communication

was good, presentations were relevant and discussions were lively. A number of valuable original reports were given, and while a few psychiatrists diverted on to woolly psychopathological speculations to the dismay of the dermatologists, this was the exception. In general, psychiatry showed up well and the consensus was that the symposium was a successful exercise in interdisciplinary communication and perhaps a significant first step in developing common concepts and jargon in order to deal with the many patients the two specialties share.

Psychodermatology appears at present to be a developing field for liaison. Because of the positive response to this symposium it is hoped to follow up with a second one in 1989, possibly in Cambridge. The organising committee will give plenty of advance notice to the psychiatric and the dermatological journals when the preliminary details have been settled.

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