

## Obituary

**RUDOLF KARL FREUDENBERG, formerly Physician Superintendent, Netherne Hospital, Coulsdon, Surrey.**

Dr Rudolf Karl Freudenberg, former Physician Superintendent of Netherne Hospital and Senior Principal Medical Officer and Head of the Medical Mental Health Section for the Ministry of Health, died at his home in Reigate on 18 April 1983 at the age of 74.

He was born on 11 May 1908 at Weinheim in Germany, the eldest son of an industrialist. He received his education in the local *Gymnasium* before studying medicine at the Universities of Kiel, Munich and Freiburg. He qualified MD in 1934. In 1935, while doing a house job in Berlin, he decided that he could no longer stay in Hitler's Germany. He went to Vienna where, in the University of Neuro-Histological Institute as assistant to Professor Sakel, he became interested in the physiology of insulin coma. This led to an invitation to join the staff of Moorcroft House and he moved to England in 1936. Like many other German *émigrés* who influenced the development of British psychiatry, he re-qualified, taking the Scottish Triple qualification in 1939. He continued to work at Moorcroft during the war years, and was one of the pioneers of the physical treatment of schizophrenia using deep insulin coma.

The use of such physical treatments in psychiatry heralded a period of active change in mental hospitals, and with the establishment of the NHS in 1947, Dr Freudenberg joined the staff of Netherne Hospital and was appointed Physician Superintendent in 1951. In spite of his interest in physical treatment he appreciated, earlier than most, the importance of social and psychological influences on the manifestations and course, not only of schizophrenia, but also other mental disorders. He presented his studies of the relative value of physical and social treatments at the Second World Congress of Psychiatry in 1957.

At that time it was still assumed that the vigorous use of physical treatment would do away with chronic psychiatric illness, just as today's reformers hope to achieve the same end by abolition of the mental hospital. Dr Freudenberg did not share such beliefs. Instead he felt that the state and the function of chronic patients could be bettered by change in the mental hospitals. With Dr Lorna Wing he surveyed the needs of the long-stay patients in the hospital, and then went on to reduce overcrowding, provide more occupation, and improve the clothing, care and attention received by the patients. While as Physician Superintendent he exercised wide administrative influence, he never lost sight of the details of the lives of individual patients and members of staff. For years he negotiated for the liberation of both staff and patients from the petty tyrannies and outmoded routines which characterized mental hospital life at the time.

Even before the 1959 Mental Health Act, he played an important, if unrecognized, part in the introduction of the in-

formal patient status. The significance and influence of the changes at Netherne Hospital on the mental state and condition of patients with schizophrenia has been documented in critical evaluations reported by the staff of the MRC Social Psychiatry Research Unit and others who worked at Netherne.

In 1961 Dr Freudenberg joined the then Ministry of Health as Senior Principal Medical Officer and Head of the Medical Mental Health Section for four productive years. In addition he took an active part in the development of post-graduate medical training, and after his retirement served on various College committees and as a member of the Expert Committee of the Council of Europe on the organization of preventive services in mental health. He was a supporter of voluntary efforts in mental health, including the Schizophrenia Fellowship, and was for many years Chairman of the Management Committee of the Cheshire Homes in South West London.

Dr Freudenberg was an extremely modest man who cloaked his warm and humorous sympathy with shy formality. Many who were charmed by his courtesy stood in awe of him. But those who had the privilege of his friendship appreciated his broad and liberal sentiments. He was a good teacher, a good listener and a sympathetic friend to those in trouble. He had a lasting and cultured interest in music and the visual arts, and in his latter days developed considerable expertise in the making of violins. He married in 1933 and is survived by his wife, Gerda, and three sons, of whom the eldest is a general practitioner.

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**RICHARD T. C. PRATT, formerly Physician in Psychological Medicine, National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases, Queen Square, London.**

R. T. C. (Dick) Pratt died peacefully at home on 20 March 1983. He had recently retired from the National Hospitals, Queen Square and Maida Vale, where he had been a consultant psychiatrist since 1954. Born in 1917, he was educated at Cheltenham College and Trinity College, Oxford, completing clinical studies at the Middlesex Hospital, London. His early interest in psychiatry developed at the Shenley Hospital and, in 1952, he was appointed as registrar to Dr Eliot Slater at the National Hospitals. He was awarded the Gaskell Medal in 1953.

At this stage his interest in genetics was already advanced, having undertaken a study of multiple sclerosis, for which he was awarded the DM in 1950. In those early days at the Square he made a number of significant contributions, including the identification of the genetic basis of primary basilar impression, and providing the original description of the syndrome of fructose intolerance.

In 1967 his book, *The Genetics of Neurological Disorders*, was published, a masterpiece of careful research and