

Editorial

An International Search for Innovation: A Challenge and a Call for Action

Samuel Johnson, at age 76, wrote about “this world where much is to be done and little to be known.” Two hundred years later, in the world of psychogeriatrics, too little is known about what is done. This becomes quite apparent at scientific meetings—especially international ones—where information is exchanged about new research and evolving ideas. Unfortunately, while research findings are more likely to find their way to dissemination via publication in a professional journal, innovative service and service delivery developments are less likely to be readily or adequately disseminated via the written word.

Many reasons have been offered for this underreporting of new approaches in the development and delivery of services. It is commonly said that those immersed in providing innovative interventions have trouble finding the time to write about their novel work, or that they are not accustomed to writing for journal publication, or that they have been discouraged by having a submission rejected by a journal. We have all witnessed such scenarios. Nonetheless, over time, a number of these program development efforts, through the force of efficacy, have influenced the direction of practice and policy. A number of these novel efforts have emerged as *de facto* service demonstrations. But the problem is typically the duration of time from initial development to eventual discovery.

In the area of psychogeriatrics, we would like to narrow the gap between development and discovery of innovative approaches to treatment and prevention in promoting health in later life. We would like to offer a challenge and make a call for action to our readership. We challenge you to join us in an international scouting effort to identify psychogeriatric innovations around the world. The International Psychogeriatric Association (IPA) would then initiate an effort to help those interested, among the identified programs, to better evaluate their own programs and to more effectively share the nature of their work with the international community. The goal would be to provide a more dynamic approach to influencing creative program and policy development for older adults, drawing upon the important knowledge base of psychogeriatrics.

Such an international search would involve scouting to identify innovation in:

- comprehensive psychogeriatric service programs
- individual service elements (e.g., outreach, day treatment, hospital care, nursing home care, etc.) of a more comprehensive service program
- specific treatment techniques or clinical interventions
- multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team approaches

Such scouting would be aimed at a broad diversity of settings—in both developing and developed nations, in both urban and rural settings, and in both the community and institutions.

When you think you have identified an innovative program or component, please mail us a note that would:

- identify the head or coordinator of the program and how to reach them (ideally including address, phone number, and fax, if available)
- briefly describe—in a page or even a paragraph—what you think is innovative or interesting about the program or individual service component
- indicate whether, to your knowledge, anything has been written about the program you are identifying and, if so, where.

We will collect the suggestions and implement follow-up activities so that this information can be disseminated appropriately. The IPA very much appreciates your involvement in what we think could be an exciting and important new endeavor for the field of psychogeriatrics and for older adults around the world.

Gene D. Cohen, MD, PhD, Editor