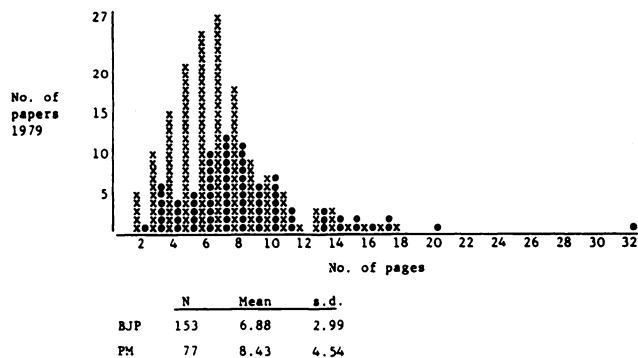
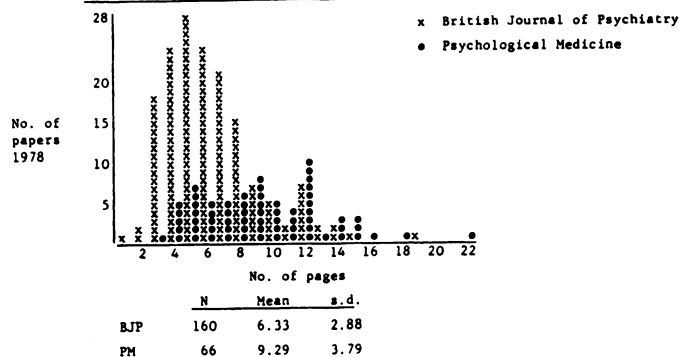


PAPER LENGTH IN THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE

DEAR SIR,

The British Journal of Psychiatry publishes fewer long papers and more short papers than *Psychological Medicine*. Could authors have public guidance whether this is editorial policy?

Frequency distribution by page length of original articles and review articles in BJP and PM during 1978 and 1979



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The present policy of this *Journal* is to have no policy about length as such, but to expect length to be related to the importance, interest, and novelty of the subject matter addressed to psychiatric readers. In papers reporting original studies we look with disfavour on long reviews of the literature if these are available elsewhere, except in special cases; also on long discursive and speculative discussions of rather few data: each subject has its appropriate length. Some

of the papers we publish are shorter than the manuscripts originally submitted. Even so, every rule has its exceptions.—*Editor*.

AN EARLY CASE OF BATTLE HYSTERIA

DEAR SIR,

Hysterical symptoms in the field of battle were first recognized during the First World War, and have been the subject of a number of monographs e.g. Hurst (1940), Yealland (1918), and Mott (1919). It is likely that many cases occurred in previous wars, but remained unrecognized owing to the limitations of medical knowledge. I would like to report a case of hysterical blindness that occurred during the Peninsular War (1808–14).

My great-grandfather, on his retirement, wrote a history of his own life and that of his family as it had been told to him. The history has been continued by each successive generation, but has not been published. The history starts with an account of my great-great-grandfather, who had been a weaver in Ayrshire before enlisting in the 94th Regiment. He was soon in active service. During the Peninsular War he fought in nine engagements and had many narrow escapes. It was towards the end of the campaign he became blind:

"He had been assisting the surgeons and rubbed his eyes, while his hands were bloody and got poison into them and became blind. He was invalided home or rather to Kilmainham Hospital in Ireland, where they did all they could to cure his blindness, but without effect so he missed being at Waterloo.

His father hearing of him being at Kilmainham, and that all hopes of his getting his sight had been given up, he petitioned the War Office for his discharge which was granted. His father with 2 or 3 friends to help, set sail in a small boat from Ayr and got my grandfather on board and set sail for home. On a part of the journey it became necessary to lower the sail, and he took more of the rowing.

Whether it was the exercise or whether the disease had worked itself out, they did not know, but the blind man whispered to his father that he could see the man in the boat. His father thought it best that the fact should not be known. After the long war there was a great demand for men and I suppose his father would be afraid that if it was known that his sight had returned he would be sent back to his Regiment so he kept about the house and took what exercise he needed in the garden at the back of his father's house.

He renewed his acquaintance with Jean B., whose garden adjoined that of his father's. For a whole month he kept up the impression that he was blind.