include dream interpretation – is more likely to regain a key role in the surely-here-to-stay multidisciplinary team than one whose expertise is narrowly confined to ‘excellence’ in prescribing, desirable though that no doubt is.


2 Reij J, Hoffbauer I. Beyträge zur Beförderung einer Kurmethode auf psychischem Wege [Contributions to the Advancement of a Treatment Method by Psychic Ways]. Curt’sche Buchhandlung, 1808.


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There are a number of key issues which those who have criticised the ‘Wake-up call for British psychiatry’\(^1\) have failed to address.

(a) In order that any illness be treated, proper assessment and diagnosis is necessary. Is there definitive evidence that complex problems such as very early psychotic illness (at-risk mental states) or type II bipolar disorder can be properly identified by non-medical staff without specific training? Is there a possibility that cases may be missed – and how big is this risk?

(b) How certain can any doctor – or indeed any person – be that they can assess ‘service users’ appropriately based only on the reported assessment of others? This is different from asking other respected professionals for their considered opinion in a multidisciplinary meeting.

(c) Why is psychiatry the only medical specialty where many seem to feel that we can accept ‘patient choice’ to take or not take medication with entire equanimity, even though we know that antipsychotic medication and antidepressants do actually help treat symptoms . . . and then why do we suddenly become concerned when tragedy happens because of non-concordance with medication?

(d) Why do we in the UK expect other professions to deliver all psychological interventions, while we simply seem to provide biological treatment? Why do we not provide psychotherapy as well as medication as many of our colleagues in Europe do? Should there not be one standard for how psychiatric help is delivered across the continent of Europe . . . and should this not obviously be holistic?

(e) Having been a GP for many years before going into psychiatry, I would ask, why are psychiatrists and their teams happy to dispense with the common courtesy of expecting the person addressed to answer a GP referral; in what other profession is ‘sending the referral back because it is inappropriate’ after a brief discussion in a multidisciplinary meeting considered an appropriate response? When this happens, is it not the service user who suffers because their problem is not dealt with?