

behaviour is chaotic. One consequence is that even if one could measure all possible variables in such a system, errors being inevitable, the ultimate behaviour would be unpredictable (sensitive dependence on initial conditions); a far cry from the predictability and control of the reductionalists. One would expect the same if, as hypothetically suggested, every neuron was replaced by a silicon chip with exactly the same properties (although measuring error would limit "exactness" as well). But all hope is not lost. Chaotic processes in systems can produce long range "order". This new "order" produces beautiful patterning believed to be responsible for the rich and varied forms in nature. It would not seem unreasonable to extend this to the rich variety and creativity of mental life. Moreover at the transitions between order and chaos this long range "order" may be characterised by long wavelength oscillations akin to the cyclical behaviour of some mental illnesses.

By viewing the mind as a result of a dynamic system one no longer needs the mind-body dichotomy, since the brain is only a part of this system. This dichotomy has plagued the area of classification in psychiatry but without it one is free to formulate psychiatric illness as a disorder of dynamic systems. Such concepts have already been applied in other areas of medicine and since many such systems have similar properties, perhaps in the areas of "healthy mind" or illness they may be usefully applied in psychiatry.

SIMON J. TAYLOR

*Mapperley Hospital
Nottingham NG3 6AA*

A list of references is available on request to the author.

Psychiatric disorders in mentally handicapped people

DEAR SIRs

In some of the *College Journal* and *Bulletin* articles, mentally handicapped people are referred to as having psychiatric and behaviour disorders. For example, the *Bulletin* (November 1986, 10, 321–322) article on 'Psychiatric Services for Mentally Handicapped Adults and Young People' states:

"All forms of psychiatric disorder are seen although the pattern differs somewhat from that in the general population and there is a high frequency of behaviour disorders."

This statement implies that behaviour disorders are not psychiatric disorders which, of course, is not correct. Conduct disorder, in both the ICD (9th revision) and DSM-III, covers behaviour disorder.

I think we should speak of psychiatric illness and behaviour disorders under the heading of psychiatric disorders. This would avoid confusion in the minds

of other professionals and managers working with us.

V. SATKUNANAYAGAM

*The Manor Hospital
Epsom, Surrey KT19 8NL*

Medical interchange

DEAR SIRs

Medical Interchange has been recently set up to facilitate the exchange of practices between doctors, both general practitioners and specialists, for short periods of time between the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. For the last ten years, I have been working as a locum consultant surgeon for four to six weeks each year in a major Sussex county hospital and have found the experience of great value and have also found that colleagues in both the United Kingdom and Australia have envied my being in a position to do this and have expressed an interest in being able to exchange their practices with colleagues for longer periods of time.

I have found a great deal of interest in this idea from editors of medical journals and newsletters in the four countries concerned and feature articles on the enterprise are about to start appearing. I have also placed advertisements in appropriate journals in the countries involved.

I would like to ask that you bring this enterprise to the attention of your members as I believe this would be to the advantage not only of Medical Interchange but also of the individuals who may well be delighted with the opportunity of an exchange.

The registration and immigration requirements are quite complex and it is the intention of Medical Interchange to carry out whatever is possible to comply with the formalities but quite clearly there are some which must be attended to personally by the doctors concerned. All details will be provided concerning these requirements.

RICHARD J. CRANE

*Medical Interchange
100 Lurline Street
Katoomba, NSW 2780, Australia*

P.S. I have recently received an enquiry from a psychiatrist in Manly, Sydney, New South Wales who has expressed an interest in exchanging his practice with that of a colleague in the United Kingdom for a period of some months.

DEAR SIRs

Enclosed with the September 1990 issue of the *Psychiatric Bulletin* was a notice about registration of psychiatrists with the General Medical Council as "trained". I am sure that other overseas members of the College would appreciate a *Bulletin* article explaining the purpose of the new register. Unless

I have misunderstood the notice, because I did not remain in the UK for senior registrar and consultant posts, the College has agreed to deem me "untrained" for the purpose of the Register.

What limitations will that place on my future employment in the UK (and Europe)?

I have been a Member of the College since 1973. An outline of the benefits of continuing membership would also be timely.

ANDREW FIRESTONE

20 Staniland Avenue
Malvern, Victoria 3144
Australia

Molecular genetic study of familial presenile dementias

DEAR SIRs

We have been funded by the Medical Research Council to carry out a molecular genetic study of Familial Alzheimer's disease. This has concentrated on demonstrating linkage with markers on the proximal long arm of chromosome 21. We have recently had our funding extended and this now includes molecular genetic studies of other familial presenile dementias, excluding Huntington's disease. We would be most interested to learn from colleagues of any families with presenile dementia. The study will involve the collection of blood samples from both affected and unaffected members and a brief clinical assessment. If you are in contact with any families that might wish to assist with our research we would be grateful if you could contact Dr M. N. Rossor at the address below.

M. N. ROSSOR

Alzheimer's Disease Research Group
Department of Neurology
St Mary's Hospital
Praed Street, London W2 1NY

J. HARDY

Alzheimer's Disease Research Group
Department of Biochemistry
St Mary's Hospital Medical School
Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Myolink and computer enhanced bio-feedback

DEAR SIRs

I wonder if any of your readers can help come up with a programme for the use of the Myolink and Relaxometer with a BBC computer to enhance relaxation. We have this equipment but the programmes enclosed from the manufacturer are not adequate for our purposes.

I look forward to hearing from anyone with a similar problem, or better still, with a solution!

NIALL GRIFFIN

St Canice's Psychiatric Hospital
Kilkenny, Ireland

Video news and education service

DEAR SIRs

I am pleased to report that this experiment is under way and a tape has been sent to all clinical tutors. If anyone would like to view this tape I would ask them to contact their clinical tutor in the first instance. Additional copies are available and anyone interested in this project is welcome to contact me at the address below.

A. MACAULAY

Department of Psychiatry
Wexham Park Hospital
Slough, Berkshire SL2 4HL