

## Historical notes

### The Association of Consultant Psychiatrists, Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

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For 40 years it has been the custom in the Yorkshire Health Region for the consultant psychiatrists working in the Region to have the opportunity to meet together informally at regular intervals. Over the years different consultants have voluntarily acted as sole co-ordinator, convener and secretary of this Association of Regional Consultants. Sadly, for various reasons in changing times, the Association has recently decided to disband. In its lifetime the Association has made an important considerable contribution to the development of psychiatric services in the Yorkshire Region. It has influenced policies and it has inspired the continuing loyalty of many consultants. It is appropriate to acknowledge the place of this Association, unique in many respects, and supremely democratic in its organisation, in the history of psychiatry in the Region.

#### *History*

The origin of the meetings of the Association of Consultant Psychiatrists in the Yorkshire Region dates back to the early days of the Second World War, 1939 to 1945. Then, the medical superintendents of the West Riding of Yorkshire mental hospitals met to discuss mutual problems with regard to the management of their hospitals and patients. At the time, Dr James Valentine of Scalebor Park Hospital, Burley-in-Wharfedale, Ilkley, Yorkshire, who was the youngest medical superintendent in the Region, had been given the job of organising the meetings which then took place only occasionally during the war.

With the impending National Health Service and the consequent discussions in Parliament, the meetings were extended to cover the whole of Yorkshire. Up to 1947 they were composed of the medical superintendents of the mental illness and mental handicap (then called mental deficiency) hospitals. About this time the Nuffield Professor of Psychiatry at Leeds University, Professor Henry Victor Dicks, was invited to be a member and from 1948 all consultants in mental illness, child psychiatry and mental handi-

cap became members. In addition, the regional psychiatrist of the Leeds Regional Hospital Board attended the meetings. Dr Valentine continued as Convener and no secretary was appointed. No definite constitution was ever formulated.

Dr Valentine believed that there were many advantages in the meetings, which were composed only of psychiatrists who met specifically to discuss mutual problems and to receive reports from the Leeds University Department of Psychiatry and from the Leeds Regional Hospital Board Headquarters. As a coherent body representing one speciality, the Association was able to bring pressure to bear on various authorities.

The Association was probably unique in the country in the manner in which close relationships with the Regional Hospital Board's regional psychiatrist and with the University Department of Psychiatry were maintained. The Regional Consultants' Association was open to psychiatrists who had contracts with the Leeds Regional Hospital Board and the United Leeds Hospitals. No formal constitution was found to be necessary.

#### *Meeting arrangements*

The Consultants' Association has normally met on a regular basis at the psychiatric hospitals throughout the Region which have offered, in turn, to host the meetings. The Association met at approximately two-monthly intervals up to 1983, when meetings became three-monthly. Occasionally, meetings have been held in the University Department of Psychiatry in Leeds. As acute psychiatric units associated with general hospitals have been opened throughout the Region, these have joined in the rota of venues. Since 1976 alternate meetings have usually been accommodated at the Harrogate Headquarters of the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority.

It was for long the custom for the meetings to be arranged successively on the consecutive working days of the week. The different days and the various locations have spread the opportunities for

consultants to attend. The meetings have always been held at 3.00 p.m. and tea has been served. The senior consultant at the hospital or department acting as host, or the most senior consultant present, has normally been elected to take the chair for the meeting.

### *Agenda*

The agendas for the meetings have generally followed a standard format – appointment to the chair, record of attendance, apologies for absence, welcome to new members, minutes of the last meeting, matters arising, report from the University of Leeds Department of Psychiatry, report from the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority Headquarters, business and other matters raised by members, time and place of next meeting, any other business.

Members have been invited to specify topics that they wished to have raised and discussed. From time to time, members or invited speakers have reported on some special topic as a preliminary to group discussion. The meetings have also been a forum for introducing new consultants to colleagues and for paying respects to retiring and deceased members of the Association.

### *Noteworthy events*

The minutes of the Association form a valuable and fascinating archive of the development and progress of psychiatry in the Yorkshire Region. They also reflect national trends, changes and political actions. A few of the more notable entries in the Association's diary are listed below.

*1965:* The first new general hospital acute psychiatric unit in the Yorkshire Region was opened at St Luke's Hospital, Huddersfield. This was to herald the eventual run-down of the large Storthes Hall Psychiatric Hospital.

*1966:* A regional mental health advisory committee was formed.

*1971, September:* Dr James Valentine retired after 40 years of service to psychiatry in Yorkshire. His role as co-ordinator was taken over by Dr A. L. G. Smith, Storthes Hall Hospital, Huddersfield. In paying tribute to Dr Valentine, Dr W. A. L. Bowen of York said that he had been "a present help in time of trouble", and through his energy and tenacity he had ensured that the opinions and advice of the consultant psychiatrists had had considerable influence on the Regional Hospital Board and other bodies.

*1975:* A psychiatric sub-committee of the Regional Medical Committee was constituted.

*1977, July:* Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield spoke to the Association about a series of brutal murders in the Leeds Police area, which became the so-called Yorkshire Ripper cases, an instance of co-operation between the police and regional psychiatrists.

*1979:* A new MMedSc degree course at Leeds University replaced the long-standing Leeds course for the Diploma in Psychological Medicine.

*1980, May:* A new Clinical Sciences Building with an academic Department of Psychiatry was opened at St James's University Hospital, Leeds.

*1983, January:* Dr Norman E. Crumpton, De La Pole Hospital, Hull, became co-ordinator in succession to Dr Smith.

*1986, January:* Dr Michael T. Haslam, Clifton Hospital, York, became co-ordinator.

*1988, February:* Naburn Psychiatric Hospital, near York, closed.

*1989, April:* Broadgate Psychiatric Hospital, near Beverley, closed. The region had over 125 consultant psychiatrists.

*1989, April:* At a meeting at St Luke's Hospital, Huddersfield, the Association agreed to disband.

### *The decision to disband*

The Association conducted a postal ballot of the membership in 1988, after attendances had become very low. Some 40% of psychiatrists replied, some 60% did not. Of those who replied, some 20% of the membership had at that time thought that the Association should be disbanded and a similar number had voted for its continuation. At a meeting on 20 April 1989, a vote was taken and the majority considered that the Association should disband. Dr Haslam wished to relinquish the task of convener and no further meetings were arranged.

### *Archives and records of the Association – for reference*

Dr A. Mortimer, Consultant Psychiatrist, St Luke's Hospital, Huddersfield, is acting as custodian of the Association's Archives. Dr D. A. Spencer, Consultant Psychiatrist, Meanwood Park Hospital, Leeds, has copies of the minutes from 1965 to 1989.