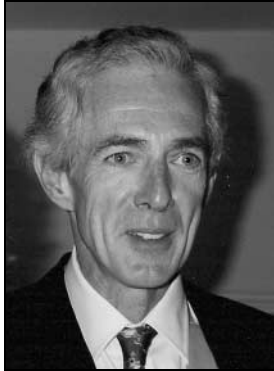


# Obituary

## Dr Jonathan Pedder



### Formerly Consultant Psychotherapist, Royal Bethlem and Maudsley hospitals

Jonathan Pedder, one of the leading consultant psychotherapists of our time, and co-author (with Dennis Brown and Anthony Bateman) of the hugely influential *Introduction to Psychotherapy* (Routledge, 2000), was born on 9 June 1937. Educated at Shrewsbury

School, Oxford, and the Middlesex Hospital, he qualified BM, ChB (Lond) in 1961. In 1974 he qualified as a psychoanalyst. He trained in psychiatry at the Maudsley, where he later became consultant psychotherapist (1980–1996). Before that he was consultant psychotherapist at Friern, Halliwick and the Whittington hospitals (1971–1974), Westminster group (1972–1974) and St Mary's Hospital (1974–1980).

Gifted with good looks, athleticism, high intelligence, and an equable temperament, Pedder's compassion took him to medicine, his fascination with people to psychiatry, his creativity and questioning spirit to psychotherapy.

An outstanding Chair of the Psychotherapy Faculty of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, one knew one was in safe hands with him at the helm (he was a keen and skilful yachtsman). His natural authority, command of detail, good sense and capacity to mount a convincing argument made him a psychotherapy advocate within the College, gaining the respect of even the most ardent sceptics.

Jonathan's modesty and reticence, and sensitivity to the narcissistic perils of leadership, put him behind, rather than on, the throne. Nevertheless, his encouragement and political sixth sense played no small part in the election of the College's first psychotherapist (and woman) president. A principled pragmatist, he was prepared to adapt psychoanalytic thinking to the prevailing political culture. His leadership led to the establishment of a substantial yet realistic measure of required psychotherapy training for junior psychiatrists. He was convinced that psychotherapy should establish itself as a profession in its own right, and that psychoanalysts should ally themselves with other hues of therapy through the UK Council for Psychotherapy (whose interminable wrangling he endured good-naturedly for several years).

Pedder's papers (soon to be published under the editorship of Gary Winship) represent an important contribution to the psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature. He pointed out the etymological link between the words metaphor and transference, both meaning 'to carry over' or 'bring across'. He endorsed the Winnicottian view that the essence of therapy is 'learning to play', and likened therapy to the experience of theatre – his cultural breadth meant that he understood the capacity of great works of the imagination to deepen emotional and social life.

An example of the acuteness of Pedder's ear was his critique of Strachey's translation of Freud's 1937 paper as 'Analysis terminable and interminable' which, he argued, would have been more accurately and therapeutically translated as 'Psychoanalysis finite or infinite'. In his study of endings in therapy, Pedder calls for a titrated, attenuated approach, acknowledging the role of continuing 'mature dependency' of patients on their analysts. 'Pedder's rule' – the period of notice which a patient should be given of an impending finish, the square root of the number of months the patient has been in treatment – is a typically elegant clinical nugget.

Given his independent-mindedness and wide cultural and scientific interests, Pedder was drawn to the 'middle' psychoanalytic group, eschewing psychoanalytic rigidity or exclusiveness. A paradox of the independent stream is that its very core values – suspicion of grand theories and dogmatism, valuation of the provisional and dialogic – mean that it can appear to lack a clear viewpoint. Pedder's oeuvre counteracts this prejudice, revealing key features of independent thought in an exemplary way.

A good example is his welding together psychoanalytic ideas about the role of aggression and disappointment with the object in mood disorder, with Brown and Harris's classic studies showing that early losses and lack of current social support are predictive factors for depressive illness. Pedder's speculation that the age at which parental bereavement occurs influences whether the subsequent depression is neurotic or psychotic has yet to be fully tested.

He drew on Balint's horticultural metaphor of 'pruning' as a model for both supervision and the role of the therapist, helping to shape and facilitate a patient's or supervisee's emotional growth and, when necessary, to remove dead wood. For Pedder, the contribution of the analyst is never fully reducible to technique. Important though transference and countertransference, projective identification, drives and defences are, there remain, *au fond*, two human beings in a relationship, trying to understand one another and to find the support and succour that suffering calls forth.

Respectful both of science and the art of psychiatry, deeply knowledgeable about psychoanalysis as well as conversant with neurobiology, able not merely to diagnose and prescribe, but to offer effective psychotherapeutic therapy, Pedder outstandingly exemplified a craft currently under threat. One suspects that were it not for his untimely illness and death he would still be in the vanguard – modestly, tirelessly, accurately marshalling the evidence needed to maintain the proud tradition of psychoanalytically informed psychiatry, which he helped to forge.

He died on 8 January 2010. His loss is keenly felt within the Psychotherapy Faculty and beyond. Our sympathies go to his wife Sue (whom he met at Oxford and to whom he was married for 42 years), and his three children and four grandchildren, of whom he was justly proud.

Jeremy Holmes

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