



The Science of the Placebo

Toward an Interdisciplinary Research Agenda. Edited by Harry Guess, Arthur Kleinman, John Kusek and Linda Engel. Pp. xi + 332. R303. BMJ. 2002. ISBN 0-7279-1594-0.

The placebo response in clinical practice has always been something of a mystery. Its reality is well established but its mechanism of action is obscure. This volume examines the placebo from various standpoints and provides a holistic focus.

Perhaps the most useful and practical aspect of the book is its comprehensive consideration of ethical issues. The inclusion of placebo control groups in clinical trials has become more contentious recently with the advent of the Helsinki Declaration in 2000. Several chapters are given to analysing the dilemma of when placebos are permissible and when they are clearly inappropriate although the 'grey areas' still remain problematic. The alternative to the randomised placebo-controlled trial is the 'non-inferiority trial' and this relatively new concept is discussed in detail.

Other sections deal with the dynamics of placebo in terms of cultural settings, personality factors, social learning and Pavlovian conditioning. There are two unnecessarily detailed chapters on the neuro-endocrine mediators of placebo effects on immunity and on the role of endogenous and non-endogenous opioid pathways in placebo analgesia.

In short, this is an informative work that provides a multidisciplinary overview of the placebo phenomenon. It will be particularly helpful to those involved in the planning of clinical trials and with the work of ethics committees.

Ashley Robins

World Report on Violence and Health

WHO. Pp. ix + 346. R195. WHO. 2002. ISBN 9-789241-545617.

Violence, more than any other single factor, is the major cause of death among the 15 – 44-year-old population globally. It destabilises individuals and communities and leads to enormous suffering. For this reason, the first World Report on Violence and Health is a seminal contribution.

It comprehensively examines different types of violence in separate chapters. These include youth violence, child abuse and neglect, violence by intimate partners, abuse of the elderly, sexual violence, self-directed violence and collective violence.

An ecological framework is used as an explanatory model for different forms of violence on individual, interpersonal and broader societal levels. The framework contributes to a holistic and meaningful understanding of violence dynamics that is crucial for interventions. The report furthermore strongly

motivates for a public health approach that encourages preventive thinking as well as traditional reactive approaches.

The most challenging aspect of the report is perhaps the recommendations for systematic action because intersectoral, multi-pronged interventions are required. It argues for collaboration between governments, NGOs and communities regionally, nationally and globally.

The challenge is to operationalise suggestions. In this regard, the report on violence and the South African health sector's strategic framework (1999-2004) share many commonalities in terms of the approach to violence and prioritisation of prevention. Both draw extensively on preventive, interdisciplinary, intersectoral and participative interventions highlighted in the Alma Ata document (WHO, 1978). The shared vision in these documents provides a useful platform for operationalising specific interventions for this country.

This report is considered essential reading for policymakers, academics, community workers and all those involved in violence and trauma-related work.

Ronelle Carolissen

IN MEMORIAM

Anne Linder

Anne Marshall Linder died in Cape Town on 2 August 2002 after a long illness.

She was the daughter of Geoffrey Linder, a Professor of Chemical Pathology at UCT for many years. Anne qualified MB ChB in 1949. Her first marriage was to architect Sam Hart and her second was to Hugh Giles.

After graduating, Anne spent a short time in clinical medicine. After this she went to England, and worked in the pathology department of the main hospital in Liverpool. Papanicolaou had put his pap smears in the early detection of cell changes preceding cancer of the cervix on the map, and Linder studied this development in England. In 1960 she returned to South Africa and in 1961 joined Dr Fry at Karl Bremer Hospital.

Professor JN de Villiers started an Exfoliative Cytology Unit there, having written part of his CMOG thesis in London on the subject. At this time the local pathologists had no interest in the discipline and it was left to the gynaecologists to develop their own laboratories to deal with it. Dr Linder was the backbone of the Karl Bremer unit and it was due to her ability and hard work that a Genetic Unit was started within the



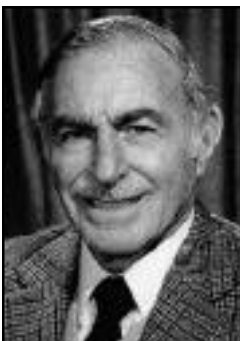
gynaecology laboratory.

A presentation on 'chromosomal abnormalities in the newborn' was given before Sir John Peel who was the gynaecologist to the Queen at the time. Anne had a remarkable memory and great intellectual ability. Because of the reluctance of the pathologists to undertake this work of cytology, there arose a request to cover the needs of private patients. Drs Linder and Fry were persuaded to undertake the private work in addition to their hospital sessions that involved teaching and diagnostic work. They initially undertook the extra duties at their respective homes. As the additional projects increased, Linder and Fry were joined by Drs Margaret Bull, Joy MacMurray and Judy Whittaker.

Many people, including her friends and partners, owe Anne a great deal of gratitude for her unselfishness and friendship as well as her loyalty and devotion to her medical work. She will also be remembered for her great love for life, gardening, reading, and laughter.

Chris Giles

Sidney Sacks



Sidney died at the age of 88 in Laguna Woods, California. Throughout his life orthopaedic surgery was his consuming vocation. He remained active in the specialty for 55 years from the time he became involved in orthopaedics with the SAMedical Corps in 1941, to his retirement as Professor of Orthopaedics at the University of California, Irvine, in 1996.

Sidney was born in Laingsburg in 1914. He was educated at SACS and graduated from UCT Medical School in 1937. After completing his internship and a short spell as a locum GP, he volunteered for the East African and SAMedical Corps. He initially served as Regimental Medical Officer in the King's African Rifles and ended up serving three and a half years in the orthopaedic division of the Corps.

After the war, he spent a year studying orthopaedics at Edinburgh and Liverpool Universities and was awarded the FRCS Edinburgh. He visited orthopaedic and rehabilitation centres in New York before returning to South Africa where he was the clinical assistant at Johannesburg General Hospital and the Transvaal Memorial Hospital for Children.

For the next 30 years, Sidney ran a private orthopaedic practice and consulted at the two abovementioned hospitals as well as Germiston Hospital. He was also a lecturer at Wits University and examiner for Pretoria Medical School.

Sidney believed that a physician should not spend a lifetime in one position. Accordingly, in 1978 he closed his practice and at the age of 64 started afresh in the United States. He was appointed Clinical Professor of Orthopaedics at Stony Brook University and Chief of Orthopaedic Services at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Northport, New York. In 1981 he was elected Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

True to his philosophy, to move on to new adventures, in 1988 he crossed the continent to take an appointment as Clinical Professor of Orthopaedics at the University of California. He held this post until his retirement in 1996. He spent his retirement years in sunny Laguna Hills, California, with his wife Golda. They considered the place to be as close to paradise as anywhere on earth.

Sidney's involvement in matters medical and orthopaedic is legion. To name but a few: he was a founder member and President of the SAOrthopaedic Association and an Elected Life Member of SAMA where he served on many committees. He was a Fellow of the British Orthopaedic Association and a member of the editorial board of the American and British Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery. He founded the first Tissue Bank in Africa; represented South Africa as a delegate to SICOT; and was President of the SARheumatism and Arthritis Foundation. He was a founder member of the International Society for the Study of the Lumbar Spine; a member of the editorial board of the Western Pacific Orthopaedic Association; Honorary Member of the Argentine Orthopaedic Association; an examiner and founder member of the SACollege of Medicine; as well as a member of other medical associations and organisations.

Sidney travelled the world and delivered papers in England, America, Sweden, Israel, Iran, Australia, Argentina, Holland, Hong Kong and Japan. He also authored 44 scientific publications.

I knew Sidney from my childhood as he was my father's closest friend, but my first endearing recollection of him was as lecturer in orthopaedics. I recall with amusement his telling our class that there were 36 operations for a fractured calcaneus, which meant that there was no single good one.

All who came in contact with him remember Sidney fondly. He was a physician with an abiding interest in the wellbeing of his patients, the education of his students and the advancement of his specialty.

Sidney is survived by his daughter Linda Samson, his son Peter Sacks, five grandchildren (one of whom is a surgeon) and four great-grandchildren.

Ian Samson



Kerneels Nel



Cornelius Johann Christoffel Nel was born in Brandfort in the Free State on 3 October 1944 and died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 58 on 17 February 2003.

He matriculated at the Sentraal High School in Bloemfontein and completed his undergraduate and postgraduate medical studies at the University of Pretoria. He was a dedicated and

brilliant student who obtained prizes for the best final year student in surgery, paediatrics and obstetrics and gynaecology. He was the recipient of the Fichardt Gold Medal for the best undergraduate student in surgery and the H F Verwoerd Medal for Research as a postgraduate student.

In 1977 he was appointed Head of the Department of Surgery at the University of the Orange Free State. He held this position until 1992 when he became Dean.

He was an Associate founder member of the SACollege of Surgeons and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He was a past President of the SA Surgical Research Society and the Inaugural President of the SA Vascular Society. He was the chairperson of the OFS branch of the SAAssociation of Surgeons from 1978-1992.

He also served on the executive committees of the following national societies: the SA Trauma Society, the SAGastroenterology Society, the SACritical Care Society and the SA Association of Surgeons. He was a member of the SA Association of Paediatric Surgeons.

He served on the Council of the SACollege of Medicine for 12 years and was the Vice-President from 1992-1995. He also served as Council member of the Medical Research Council from 1995-2001. He was a member of MASA/SAMAsince 1968.

He was a member of the following international societies: Société Internationale de Chirurgie, the World Association of Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Surgery, the European Society of Vascular Surgery, the International Association for the Surgery of Trauma and Surgical Intensive Care and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

He was a member of various committees of the SAMedical and Dental Council and the Interim National Medical and Dental Council. He served as the chairperson of the Education Committee of the Medical and Dental Professions Board as well as on the Executive Committees of both the Board and the Health Professions Council, and on committees of the Department of Health.

He served on many Faculty and University committees including the Executive Committee of the Senate of the

University of the Free State, the Executive Management Committee of the University and the Executive Committee of the University Council.

He delivered 149 papers, published 104 articles and 35 abstracts as well as 10 chapters in books. He served on the editorial boards of four journals.

The Chancellor's Medal of the UOFS was awarded to him during 1998 for his outstanding work in the field of Health Sciences. He also received an Honorary Fellowship from the SACollege of Medicine in 1998.

He served as external examiner at the Universities of Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Witwatersrand, Natal and MEDUNSAas well as for the SACollege of Medicine.

He was the President of the SAAssociation for Medical Education from 1991-1993. During 1996 he was leader of several teams of examiners to Cuba and Germany for the evaluation of medical education and doctors.

He received the Golden Ventricles Award for the best lecturer in clinical medicine in 1977, 1981 and 1986. He trained 28 registrars in surgery, of whom seven obtained their degrees cum laude, two went on to obtain doctorates in surgery and he was the co-promoter for two others.

Kerneels Nel was undoubtedly one of the greatest sons of medicine in this country. He made a huge contribution in the fields of education and surgery both in South Africa and internationally.

He was a very hard worker, meticulous and systematic. He was always on the move to tackle new challenges and to make a difference. He was a good organiser and could lead meetings with a vision that few others could emulate. He was dedicated to his profession and a role model to thousands of medical students. It will be difficult to fill his place but his legacy lives on and he will be long remembered for the wonderful example he set for doctors in South Africa and abroad.

He is survived by his wife Dalina, four sons and a daughter.

Andries Stulting

Notice to Contributors

The *SAMJ* endeavours to reflect the original sentiment and vital facts of submitted obituaries, letters to the editor and book reviews. We regrettably cannot give contributors foresight of edited versions prior to publication. Obituaries should preferably be submitted via email to news@samedical.org and be no longer than 350 words.