

## Editorial: Variety in Mental Health Research

"Variety's the very spice of life, that gives it all its flavour."  
William Cowper (1731–1800)

Readers of the IJP are accustomed to issues being devoted to a specific topic. This issue, however, is characterized by the absence of a theme, or, to give it a positive reframing, it is devoted to variety in mental health research.

Variety in research may be expressed in many forms. The settings of the studies in this issue are diverse, ranging from a therapeutic nursery in Petach Tikva, to an outpatient department in Sanliurfa, Turkey, the admission wards of Beer Yaakov hospital, the National Psychiatric Case Register of the Ministry of Health, and prisons and military call-up offices in Russia. The sizes of the samples studied also vary enormously: Ponizovsky et al. examine the diagnostic consistency of 10,000 first psychiatric admissions, Rosca et al. follow up 2,150 patients admitted for the first time over the next decade, while Kandel Katzenelson et al. discuss the lives and hospitalizations of two married patients with psychosis, Lerner et al. present two cases and Ellencweig et al. describe just one. The topics that attract researchers are equally diverse: for over two decades, the late Shmuel Maizel studied mothers with psychosis who were hospitalized with their babies, while Alexander Borochoy was drawing and classifying the tattoos of over 1,400 people in Russia.

For those bewildered by tables of numbers, three of the eleven papers are case studies. The rewards for taking a careful history are apparent in Ellencweig's single case. A 10-year history of hypertension and a history of a course of sulphonamides a week earlier, in a 33-year-old admitted with an acute psychosis, lead to a possible diagnosis of a purely psychiatric presentation of acute intermittent porphyria without abdominal pain. Lerner et al. describe two cases of Internet delusions (readers of Hebrew will enjoy the play on words in the title of the Hebrew abstract). An interesting development in the ethics of publishing case studies appears in the acknowledgements of Kandel Katzenelson et al., as both patients read the account that was to be published and signed their agreement to its publication.

For this publication, Kandel Katzenelson et al. called their two married patients Abraham and Sara, borrowing the names of the parents of the Jewish na-

tion. According to Genesis 11:28–32, the biblical Abraham and Sara were born in Ur of the Chaldees (identified usually as in Iraq), they moved to Harran, and from there they journeyed to the land of Canaan. An interesting set of coincidences occurs in this issue in that the study by Abdurrahman et al. was carried out in Harran near Sanliurfa, Turkey. According to local Turkish tradition, Sanli-Urfa was Ur and the birthplace of Abraham, and the city has a holy site called "Abraham's cave," while Harran, 48 kilometers from Sanliurfa, is generally accepted as the biblical Harran where Abraham brought his family before he and Sara set out for the land of Canaan — Israel.

The author of "Variety's the very spice of life" had his own varied personal and psychiatric history. William Cowper was one of the great popular poets of eighteenth century England. He trained as a solicitor, but, after a psychotic depression and three suicide attempts, he went to live with a retired curate. After the curate was killed in a riding accident, Cowper remained with the curate's wife. They planned to marry, but she was dissuaded by another episode of psychotic depression in which Cowper believed he was condemned to hell and that God wanted him to sacrifice his life. He composed church hymns and then wrote his major work, *The Task*, a book of poems that contained the above oft-quoted adage. He published it in 1785 along with *The diverting history of John Gilpin*, which, once he acknowledged authorship, made him a very famous man. When the curate's widow died in 1796, Cowper became depressed and never recovered.

The issue concludes with the obituaries of two of the most gifted teachers of psychiatry of this generation in Jerusalem.

We conclude with the final poem, *The Castaway*, written by William Cowper in which he described his sorrow without his life-long companion.

No voice divine the storm allay'd,  
No light propitious shone;  
When, snatched from all effectual aid,  
We perish'd, each alone:  
But I beneath a rougher sea,  
and whelm'd in deeper gulphs than he.

David Greenberg, editor  
Jerusalem. israeljp@huji.ac.il