

the needs of people in crisis and how local services could go about meeting them in order to avoid the trauma of admission at all. Lastly, and as the authors admit, there seems to have been little prior thought given to the integration of the meeting into a process of service development that might ensure that the views expressed resulted in improvements. Listening to people is only a first step. Action needs to follow to ensure that services change for the better.

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A traditional view of neurophysiology was that the faculties of sensing and understanding were quite separate. In the visual system, for example, signals were thought to be relayed from the retina to the visual cortex, then to the various association areas, and finally brought together to be 'comprehended' in some master theatre. The problem for neurophysiologists was that, the closer they examined the brain, the more it came to resemble a collection of association cortexes with no master theatre: a lot of little engines, and no Fat Controller.

Within the past two decades, the beginnings of a solution to this problem (the missing Fat Controller) have emerged. The hypothesis is as yet tentative, but it has profound implications for our understanding of brain and mind. This special edition of *Scientific American*, 'Mind and Brain', brings together researchers from neurobiology and cognitive science in an attempt to introduce these ideas to a general readership. All of the authors are exceptionally well-known, and each has made an impressive contribution to his or her own discipline.

The format works well. There are chapters on neurodevelopment, the visual image, learning, language, memory, sex differences, mental illness, ageing, neural networks, and consciousness. Although each contribution can be read in isolation from the whole, the editors have clearly intended readers to work their way through systematically, as there are recurring themes which are gradually developed. One of the main themes is that of multi-stage integration of perceptual information. The cerebral cortex displays an extraordinary degree of functional specialisation, but there is no master area to which sensory information converges. Instead, the integration of information is a process in which perception and comprehension occur simultaneously. Evidence for this model is presented, and the implications discussed. There are obvious parallels with

the theory of consciousness recently put forward by Daniel Dennett (1992).

The chapters on the developing brain and the visual system are particularly good; the chapter on mental illness is the one weak point. In truth, there is more about 'brain' than 'mind' in this volume, and some readers may feel that the title is misleading. The whole is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs and colour graphics, and the general quality of the production is excellent. At \$4.95, it provides good background reading in neurobiology.

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## References

DENNETT, D.C. (1992) *Consciousness Explained*. London: Allen Lane.

### 1991 Annual Report and Journal on Torture.

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, Juliane Marie Vej 34, DK-2100 Copenhagen 0, Denmark.

The Danish Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims (RCT) has been a leading agency in the development of a medical and rehabilitation response to survivors of torture.

The Annual Report for 1991 (in English and Danish) well illustrates the range of its activities, its clinical work, its publications and its international activities (through the newly formed International Council, IRTC). I will focus on two of these, a new Journal (*Torture*) and the international setting.

*Torture* (now in its second volume) is a free, English-language, quarterly journal, which provides an opportunity for professionals and torture survivors to describe and share their experiences of work in this field. It has prestigious backers; the most recent issue starts with a paper on medical ethics and the activities of the Danish Medical Association by its president and continues with contributions from Uruguay, France, Netherlands, USA, Pakistan, Germany, Estonia, UK, Philippines, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Spain and South Africa as well as a series of conference summaries and international reports from Amnesty International. The journal is anecdotal and descriptive rather than scientific but has interest nonetheless and clearly has scope for further development.

The international setting is rather more complex. The group has been active in sponsoring treatment centres in other countries. The Annual Report includes a description of the establishment of the Al-Riggae Centre in Kuwait following the Iraqi withdrawal from that country. At present rates of