

## *John Crammer*

(Editor July 1977–July 1983)

### *Tributes on the occasion of his retirement*

Over the past twenty years the *British Journal of Psychiatry* has become firmly established as a *Journal* of international repute. Scientific standards and integrity of the highest level were attained under the editorial guidance of Eliot Slater. These were continued under the editorship of Edward Hare whose business management also transformed the finances of the *Journal*.

John Crammer was elected Editor in July 1977. He had already had editorial experience with the *British Medical Journal*, Penguin Books and also the *British Journal of Psychiatry* (as an Assistant Editor, from 1968–1973). To the six-year tenure of his editorship he brought a punch and vigour which was sustained throughout. He was deeply conscious of his function as spokesman for the readership, and each potential contribution was keenly looked at in terms of how it would appeal to the general psychiatric reader. Papers of relevance to the practising psychiatrist caring for his patients held a central place in his deliberations. He also showed a strong desire to encourage the writings of younger psychiatrists and those from under-developed countries.

John Crammer was a stimulating and imaginative Editor. He meticulously examined each aspect of the *Journal* with an eye to improvements, and his own writings displayed the original, lively, and economic quality he was after in the contributions of others. Despite the heavy responsibilities of selecting which of 400–500 papers submitted each year should be published, and also managing the onerous business matters of the *Journal*, John Crammer wrote with others (and guided into a second edition) a valuable book on the *Use of Drugs in Psychiatry* as well as a number of scientific papers. He was also an Examiner for the College Membership and served on the College's Research Committee, where he continues to pursue interests in ECT and Sudden Deaths in Hospitals.

During his time as Editor, John Crammer expanded the Editorial Board considerably. This helped to accelerate the speed of publication and to maintain the eclectic balance of the papers published. Much re-writing was done by himself and colleagues in the editorial office so that papers usually appeared in the *Journal* in a much clearer and more succinct form than when they arrived. A great deal of his time was taken up with guidance to contributors; he could be highly direct with criticism which was, painful as it may have been on occasion, generally on target.

As a colleague, John Crammer has provided a judicious blend of constructive suggestions, prodding, encouragement, humorous asides, and delegation which was much valued. He had an independence and openness of mind which was forever active, dissatisfied, and questioning. Largely because of this, his period of office can be looked back on as one of considerable achievement in literary and scientific terms, and one which continued the high tradition established by his predecessors.

ALAN KERR

John Crammer made an early mark in his psychiatric career, publishing his first observations on weight changes in mental patients while he was a registrar at Cane Hill Hospital. This work set the pattern for further research into the major psychiatric illnesses, which he tackled by means of biochemical and pharmacological methods of study.

An interest in chemistry goes back to John Crammer's early days in Cambridge. He was an Open Scholar at Christ's College and worked as a research student in the Biochemical Laboratory in Cambridge. He qualified in Medicine at University College Hospital Medical School in 1946. His early training in psychiatry was at Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospital, but not before a spell of National Service in the R.A.F. and editorial work with the *British Medical Journal*. He held research fellowships before becoming a consultant psychiatrist, first at All Saints Hospital and the Uffculme Clinic in Birmingham and later at St John's Hospital, Stone. In 1971 he was appointed senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry and consultant in charge of the Metabolic Unit at the Maudsley Hospital.

John Crammer has conducted important studies in seeking to correlate plasma levels of antidepressant and neuroleptic drugs with patients' clinical responses. He was one of the first investigators to demonstrate the complicated nature of such problems, and carefully took into account the active metabolites of the administered drug and factors such as plasma protein binding. In more recent years he has collaborated with Dr S. Checkley in demonstrating that severe depressive illness is associated with lowered activity of brain alpha-adrenergic receptors, and with Dr Papadopoulos in isolating a new metabolite of thioridazine. The value of this research was recognised in 1981 by the appointment of John Crammer to the Readership in Biological Psychiatry.

In making this tribute to John Crammer it is important not to confine oneself to his achievements in research. His close colleagues have come to recognise and value his solid qualities as a thoughtful clinician. The breadth of his experience before obtaining his academic appointment has played an important part in shaping him as a clinician. But his success as a psychiatrist owes a great deal also to his gentle, unassuming manner, the regard he displays for his nursing and other clinical colleagues, and the trust he elicits from his patients.

GERALD RUSSELL