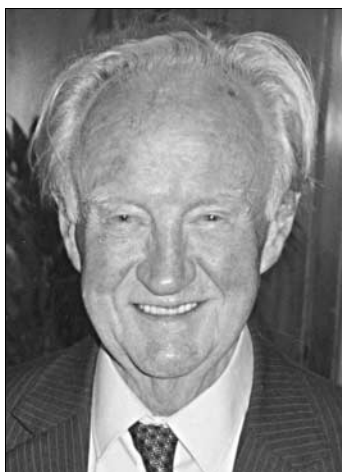




obituary



Anthony Storr

Formerly Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist, Oxford Health Authority

Anthony Storr was Britain's most literary psychiatrist. He was widely respected as a fount of wisdom and as having good sense in a profession not particularly noted for such qualities, but alas, like other kind and compassionate men, he was no stranger to suffering, particularly at formative stages of his life.

Born in London, Storr was a solitary, friendless child plagued by frequent illness, including severe asthma and septicaemia, from which he nearly died. He was the youngest of four children, separated by 10 years from his closest sibling. His father, Vernon Faithfull Storr, Sub-Dean of Westminster Abbey, was 51 when Anthony was born and his mother, Katherine Cecilia Storr, was 44, from whom he seemed to have inherited a tendency to occasional episodes of depression.

Virtually an only child, Storr was affected by the trauma, shared by most boys of his class and time, of being sent away to a boarding prep school at the age of 8. There, and later at Winchester College, he was bitterly unhappy. Extremely slow to make friends, and showing little proficiency for games, he was bullied and made only average academic progress. Though utterly miserable, it never occurred to him to complain to his parents, or attempt to run away, because boarding school was then a fact of life. But the sense of being a loner never left him, and was to affect the course of his career, as well as the content of his books. What preserved his sanity and emotional equilibrium was a growing passion for music. From an early age he attended performances in

Westminster Abbey and was later allowed to sit in the organ loft, an enormous thrill.

At Winchester he sang in the choir, played the viola in the orchestra and piano solos in concerts. He always maintained that he would much rather have been a professional musician than a psychiatrist or writer, had he been blessed with the necessary talent and training; he freely acknowledged that his friendship with artists of the calibre of Alfred Brendel, and the musicologist Hans Keller, meant far more than would have equivalent friendships with Freud, Jung or Adler.

Storr's decision to become a psychiatrist was made soon after he went up to Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1939. His moral tutor was C.P. Snow, who became a lifelong friend. "I owed him a tremendous debt", Storr told me. "He was the first person who made me feel I might be any good at anything; I had disappointed parents and teachers by not doing nearly as well as I should have. When I told Snow tentatively that I might go into psychiatry, he said, 'I think you'd be very good at it'".

After 2 years at Cambridge, Storr was given a wartime courtesy degree, without taking a tripos, and continued his medical studies at Westminster Hospital (1941–1944), where he won prizes for medicine and surgery. He gained the MRCP in 1946.

His asthma precluded military service and, after a period as house physician at Runwell Hospital, he went to the Maudsley (1947–1950), where he survived the ordeal of being Professor Sir Aubrey Lewis' first senior registrar on his newly-formed professional unit. Lewis, a brilliant but obsessional polymath, was highly critical of his staff and undermined the confidence of some of the less tough who worked for him. Storr stuck it for nearly 2 years, then asked to be moved, thus effectively ruining his prospects for advancement within the psychiatric establishment. "I owed Lewis one thing, at least," admitted Storr "once you had suffered the experience of presenting a case at one of his Monday morning conferences, no other public appearance, whether on radio, TV or the lecture platform, could hold any terrors for you."

He obtained the DPM in 1951 and, developing an interest in analytical psychotherapy, went into analysis with Jung's English friend and colleague, Dr E. A. Bennet, and later became a member of the (Jungian) Society for Analytical Psychology. He practised psychotherapy privately and, from 1961, combined his practice with various hospital appointments as a consultant.

Storr's reputation as a writer and broadcaster began with publication of his first book, *The Integrity of the Personality*,

in 1960. He was 40, and, up to that point, had not thought of himself as a writer. "I just felt the need to explain to myself what the hell I thought I was doing", he said. "For me, that is the motive for writing anything. I get intrigued by a puzzle, and writing a book is the best way to solve it." During the following years he published 11 other books of which the most notable were *The Dynamics Of Creation* (1972), *Jung* (1973), *The Art Of Psychotherapy* (1979), *Solitude* (1989), *Freud* (1989), his favourite, *Music And The Mind* (1993), and *Feet Of Clay* (1996).

Although he did a Jungian training, Storr declined to be labelled a Jungian, preferring to remain "an eclectic sceptic rather than a convert". His books reflected this lack of dogmatism. His love of music and literature, together with his medical and psychiatric training, enabled him to bridge the 'two cultures' defined by his friend, Snow.

Storr's particular gift for rendering difficult concepts accessible, as well as his lucid, immensely readable style, made his books as appealing to lay people as to professionals, and his sales reflected this. All but two of his 12 titles have remained in print and, while sales were steady in the UK, they did particularly well in the US, where *Solitude* sold 100 000 copies. *The Essential Jung* (1983) sold 50 000 worldwide, *Freud* sold 30 000 and *Jung* 75 000. The books were translated into 24 languages, including Korean and Malaysian, and Storr was especially charmed when *Solitude* was translated into Chinese for the Republic of Inner Mongolia.

He served as a member of the Parole Board (1976–1977) and the Williams Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship (1977–1979), and his need to penetrate the mysteries of deviant or violent behaviour was apparent in his books on sexual deviation (1964), human aggression (1968) and human destructiveness (1972). At the same time, his understanding of human psychopathology gave him a rich appreciation of the creative possibilities inherent in mental suffering, and the powerful potential for self-healing to be found in artistic and intellectual creativity. This made him impatient with the medical model for psychiatry and its obsession with its symptomatic classification. "I want to show", he wrote, "that the dividing lines between sanity and mental illness have been drawn in the wrong place. The sane are madder than we think, the mad saner."

In 1974 Storr gave up private practice in favour of a teaching appointment at the Warneford Hospital, Oxford; a post he



columns

held until his retirement in 1984. He was very happy in Oxford, enjoying dining rights at Wadham College and becoming a Fellow of Green College.

A number of honours were granted him in appreciation of his contribution to psychiatry and literature. He was elected Emeritus Fellow of Green College (1984),

Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature (1990) and Honorary FRCPsych (1993). The generosity of spirit, so apparent in his writing, was no less evident in his personality and was freely expressed in the warm support and encouragement he gave to younger psychiatrists, psychotherapists and writers, as well

as to the patients from all walks of life who came to consult him. He died on 17 March 2001, aged 80. Storr was twice married, first to Catherine Cole, the writer with whom he had three daughters before a divorce in 1970. They survive him, as does his second wife, Catherine Peters.

Anthony Stevens

reviews

Introduction to Medical Law

By Peter Marquand. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann. 2000. 125 pp. £15.99 (pb.) ISBN: 0-7506-4239-4

While I have been reading this book over the last few weeks the media has been full of cases in which many aspects of medical law have been aired, including the court actions surrounding the separation of conjoined twins born in Manchester. The book helped me sort out some of the journalistic flannel and understand what the real legal issues are.

Near the beginning of the book the authors look at the issues of capacity and consent. Capacity is one of the most complex and frequently misunderstood concepts in medical treatment and the simple explanation offered goes a long way to clarifying it. Most doctors only need a detailed understanding of the concept of capacity when a difficult clinical situation arises and the book would be a useful reference to refresh anyone's memory when needed.

The remaining chapters cover many important aspects of law. Only the chapter on risk management seems slightly out of place, as it is not clear why this subject, which seems to be more about good clinical practice than the law, is included. As a psychiatrist, the chapter on the Mental Health Act appears rather simplistic and does not go into the subtleties of the Act, which are part of day-to-day psychiatric practice. Similarly, the chapter on drugs and prescribing does not go into the detail that a substance misuse psychiatrist would find helpful. However, the chapters on subjects I do not know well, such as wills, abortion and transplant law, I found incredibly interesting.

This book, like any other introductory text, only summarises the issues it covers.

There is no discussion of issues such as the reforms of the Mental Health Act and the General Medical Council. The book finishes appropriately with a reassuring practical chapter on defending a criminal negligence claim and another that offers guidance on report writing for experts in civil cases.

This book is exactly what it says – an introduction to medical law. It is written for all doctors and as such has little detail on issues relevant to psychiatrists. It will, though, be a very useful reference text on the more general issue of the law as applied to medicine and invaluable to trainees in any branch of medicine. I will treasure my copy carefully!

Emily Finch Consultant in Substance Misuse, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust

Pull yourself together! A survey of the stigma and discrimination faced by people who experience mental distress

The Mental Health Foundation. 2000. 27 pp. £10.00 (pb.) ISBN: 0-901944-87-4

What is the best way to influence mental health policy? One approach used by the Mental Health Foundation, the UK's largest mental health charity, is to publish reports that aim to educate and inform on mental health issues. Concern that the stigmatisation of mental illness prevents individuals acknowledging their difficulties and seeking appropriate help was the impetus behind this survey.

This reviewer's problem was whether to read this report as scientific literature, or as an account of individuals' experiences. The postal survey included health professionals and service users on the charity's mailing list. Supporters of a campaigning body are more likely to

report their negative experiences and this raises the question of what population those surveyed represent. In addition, a response rate of only 13% calls into doubt the validity of the study.

Of the replies received, 70% reported discrimination in various settings, and respondents were asked to describe their experiences. Stigmatising views encountered included the fear that mental illness is contagious and that it represents a character flaw. Several people perceived that their mental distress had been dismissed by doctors and that comorbid physical problems were taken less seriously. The difficulties in finding appropriate health care and applying for work, or the experiences of being shunned by friends and families, are sobering reading.

This is where the report is more successful, as narrative rather than as quantitative research. As such, the study is a useful resource for those planning qualitative research into stigma and mental health. In addition it provides suggestions on how stigma can be challenged. These include the proposal that interested organisations combine in an anti-discrimination campaign.

Disappointingly, the authors seem to be unaware of the College's Changing Minds Campaign, which suggests that communication between the College, charities and self-help groups must be improved if we are to get the message across. Perhaps we need to combine the emotive accounts contained in this survey with the rigour of scientific research.

The instruction of the report's title should be addressed at the mental health charities and at the College. When we pull 'ourselves' together, our influence on mental health policy will be greatly enhanced.

Jim Bolton Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE

miscellany

Sydney job swap

Dr C. Wijeratne, Consultant Old Age Psychiatrist working in Sydney teaching hospital, wishes to swap job and home

with a similar colleague working in England, commencing after August 2002, for about 2 years. Those interested can contact Dr Wijeratne at the following address: Dr C. Wijeratne, 1

Edna St, Willoughby, NSW 2068, Australia. Alternatively, e-mails can be sent to: wijeratnec@sesahs.nsw.gov.au.