

Obituary

SAMAI ISAAC DAVIDSON, Medical Director, Shalvata Mental Health Centre, Tel-Aviv University Medical School, Hod Hasharon, Israel.

Professor Shamai Davidson, Medical Director of Shalvata Mental Health Centre, died on 18 March 1986 aged 59.

Shamai, born in Dublin in 1926, was the eldest of four sons. He grew up in a traditional Jewish home in Glasgow and it was there that he completed his medical education. Afterwards he specialised in psychiatry in London and Oxford.

Shamai, along with his wife Jenny and their two elder children (David and Jonathan), made aliyah to Israel in 1955. His decision, as a young British psychiatrist, to live in Israel originated from a strong Zionist affinity to his Jewishness. In a 1976 interview with *Meida Larofe (Information to the Physician)* he said, "I made aliyah because I wanted my children to have a complete Jewish identity, and not a semblance of such as is found in the Jewish way of life in the Western world." In addition, he said: "I saw in Israel a large-scale rehabilitation project of the Jewish people who had undergone vast and massive traumatisation and I felt a need to contribute my own modest contribution in this rehabilitative process."

During his first five years as a 'new oleh' he worked under the tutelage of the late Professor Winnik at 'Talbieh' Hospital in Jerusalem. In 1961 the Davidson family moved to Haifa where he established an ambulatory-psychiatric service in the Linn Clinic, and for the next 12 years was Medical Director of the Kupat Holim Mental Health Clinic in Haifa.

In 1973 Shamai Davidson became the Medical Director of Shalvata Mental Health Centre, replacing Professor Ruth Yaffe on her retirement. From then and until his recent untimely death he devoted his time, energy and proven capabilities in developing and enlarging the once small psychiatric hospital into a major regional mental health centre.

Shamai Davidson claimed that psychiatry itself was often too restricted and encapsulated within the confines of the psychiatric hospital. He believed psychiatry needed to expand and penetrate all branches of medicine and community services.

He strove for psychiatry to become an integral part of the work of physicians at a general hospital, and for more emphasis on the mental components of physical disorders and illnesses. Davidson was aware of the danger involved in developing a too technological, scientific and research-oriented medicine that could bring about the abandonment of the traditional holistic model of the doctor-patient relationship and the dehumanisation of medicine.

In addition to his development of community psychiatric services, which for the last few years was his 'pet' project, Professor Davidson devoted a great part of his time and energy to the Holocaust and its traumatic effect on survivors and their families. This subject, since his aliyah to

Israel, was always of particular interest to him. In one of his interviews he said: "I feel a personal responsibility to work in this field. Unfortunately, it is a problem that has been neglected far too long." Davidson was especially interested in the mental effects of the Holocaust on children of Holocaust survivors, on 'the Second Generation'.

In 1979 Shamai Davidson was appointed Professor in the School of Social Work of Bar-Ilan University, and afterwards he served as Head of the Elie Wiesel Chair for the Study of the Psycho-Social Trauma of the Holocaust. This appointment was especially aimed at teaching and researching the Holocaust and its massive traumatic and psychosocial effects. In 1983 Davidson was appointed to an Associate Clinical Professorship in the School of Medicine of Tel-Aviv University where he was actively involved until his death.

Israeli psychiatry has lost a leading member. His patients have lost a warm-hearted, humane and sensitive therapist and Shalvata Mental Health Centre has lost the man who had been its director for more than 13 years.

MN

LOUIS MINSKI, Honorary Consultant, St George's Hospital, London SW17

Louis Minski, a foundation fellow of the College, died at Cheam, Surrey on 11 September 1986, aged 84.

Minski was born in Sunderland and qualified in Newcastle in 1923. He gained his DPM in 1926, MD in 1927, MRCP in 1929 and was elected FRCP in 1943. He was awarded the Gaskell Prize and Gold Medal of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association in 1933. One of his first appointments after qualifying was at Bootham Park Hospital, York, where he remained until 1929. He then decided to come south and became Second Assistant Medical Officer at the Maudsley Hospital, under Professor Edward Mapother. During this time he became interested in Huntington's Chorea and together with Dr Erich Guttmann undertook one of the first surveys of families with this disease. In 1938 he was appointed Deputy Medical Superintendent at St Ebba's Hospital, Epsom. He was then requested to take over Sutton Training Centre and convert it into Sutton Emergency Hospital, later to become Belmont Hospital. He was appointed Physician Superintendent from September 1939 and remained as such until 1957. The conversion of the training centre into a hospital was no easy task but by October 1939 there were facilities for neurotic as well as general medical and surgical patients. In 1940, following Dunkirk, convoys of wounded of many nationalities were admitted and the hospital was used as a transit one when the



invasion of Normandy took place in 1944. He initiated many new treatments in the hospital, especially for the neuroses, for the treatment of which Belmont Hospital became a centre after the war. He pioneered the treatment of the neuroses, and even psychoses, in a hospital run on the lines of a general hospital with no legal formalities and no restrictions. He thus anticipated by a number of years the findings of the Royal Commission on the law relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency (1955) for which he was an expert witness while serving as a member of the SW Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board.

During his time as an examiner for Parts I and II of the DPM and as a lecturer in psychiatry for the University of London, Minski saw the need for a simple textbook for students and nurses and in 1946 he published his *Practical Handbook of Psychiatry for Students and Nurses* which ran for six editions, the final one being in 1973. However, in 1978 a seventh edition was published as *Minski's Handbook for Psychiatry*, which was edited by R. G. Priest and G. Woolfson. He became a consultant psychiatrist to St George's Hospital London, The Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital, London, Sutton General Hospital and Belmont Hospital. In all these hospitals his knowledge, efficiency and strong, warm personality made him outstanding.

It was as a result of his work at the Royal National Throat Hospital that he saw the need for small but highly staffed and home-like residential units to diagnose the cause of non-communication in children. He succeeded in starting

such a home which was funded by the Regional Board and the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust. The problem proved to be not a simple differentiation between sub-normality and deafness, as had been thought, but between other conditions such as autism, psychosis, aphasia, brain damage and emotional disturbance. Every effort was made to treat, rehabilitate and place the children in society. In 1970 he was co-author with Professor Michael Shepherd of a book, *Non-Communicating Children*, which received world-wide coverage and was translated into Spanish. Minski was a pioneer and his ideas have spread and influenced many later workers in the field of psychiatry.

His final working years were spent in an attempt to help Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWs) whom he thought had received a raw deal after the war.

He was a sports enthusiast: in his day he played rugby and represented Yorkshire Gentlemen at cricket.

He was a devoted family man: his wife Violet died in 1973 and he is survived by their only daughter, Margaret.

MJM

The deaths of the following have also been reported:

JOHN STUART HARRIS, formerly Lord Chancellor's Visitor; Flat 18, Upcher Court, The Esplanade, Sheringham, Norfolk.

CHARLOTTE WOLFF, 10 Redcliffe Place, London SW10.

New Publications

Alcohol—Our Favourite Drug, a new report from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, argues that we must recognise alcohol as a potentially addictive drug, and recommends a series of government preventative strategies. New guidelines on safe drinking levels for both men and women are also given. The report proposes that two objectives be set: to prevent any further rise in consumption and, in the longer term, to reduce it by one third. The report is published by Tavistock Publications (hardback £18.00; paperback £6.95) and is available from booksellers nationwide.

The second report of the Royal College of Nursing AIDS Working Party *Nursing Guidelines on the Management of Patients in Hospital and the Community Suffering from AIDS* is available from RCN Publications Department, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1M 0AB, price £1.80, including postage and packing.

Healthcare Parliamentary Monitor covers healthcare developments in Parliament and at the DHSS and is published each fortnight while Parliament sits. The annual subscription is £180 (four quarterly payments of £45). Further information: Cadmus Newsletters Ltd., South Bank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ (telephone 01 735 8171).

Loss, Grief & Care is a new quarterly journal published by The Haworth Press. The Editor welcomes submission of papers for consideration and prospective authors should request an Instructions for Authors brochure from him: Dr Austin H. Kutscher, President, Foundation of Thanatology, 630 West 168th Street, New York, NY 10032, USA. Subscription details and other information: The Haworth Press, Inc, 12 West 32 Street, New York, NY 10001, USA.