



Letter to the Editor

A critical view of the Journal

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Dear Dr. Bartocci,

I have some reservation about the title of our Journal. Since it was launched, I was waiting to see how it would organize itself, now that it has been done, it seems that it will follow the standard procedure of established journals. However, the title remains a throwback from that haloed predecessor, 'Transcultural Psychiatric Research and Review'. When that 'Review' journal was started in 1954 by Dr.s Wittkower and Freed, culture was practically nowhere on the psychiatric scene. Dr. Wittkower's aim was to provide a platform for psychiatrists in far-flung places. He felt these people may have good ideas but they do not get any chance to get published in main journals, as their works are not considered up to the mark. (Travels and grants in those days were also difficult.) So, certain areas of psychiatry never get any exposure. Hence a journal that would publish their vague researches or sub-standard articles would be appreciated. It was expected that such writings would automatically reflect the local culture, and serve its purpose as no other.

However, the situation has changed now, most countries are having their own journal to serve their mental health professionals. However, if in the old days culture was excluded, in the new era dissidence or anything close to it are excluded. There had always been dissidence in psychiatry; even psychoanalysis initially did not find a place in the mainstream. Now there are anti-psychiatry, radical psychiatry and so forth, cultural psychiatry, though not an anathema like the ones just mentioned, remains perhaps, a little unhappily in the fringes. It has never tried to look deeply, (does not even now), why culture should be denied its place in the center stage of human mind, normal or abnormal.

Psychiatry had to struggle to be accepted as a branch of medicine; in that endeavor it had to behave with much 'political correctness', which precludes any study of destruction of other cultures by the dominant western culture. It is not simply a matter of industrialization, as so many social scientists have shown there had been a play of power and politics as well.

I am attaching an article to show the effect of British Colonialism on Indians, it may not fit the journals guidelines. However, such may be accommodated as 'viewpoint' or 'opinion' etc.

Hope you will give your kind attention to the matter.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ajita Chakraborty

Dear Dr. Chakraborty,

Thanks for your letter to the Editor and for the paper you sent us. I was very happy to receive both your letter and your paper, since they perfectly reflect the mission of the WCPRR. I think that your reflections will spur younger colleagues to express their views on Cultural Psychiatry the

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same way you did. In my opinion, *emic* outlooks and personal reflections are just as precious as the kind of papers written with the ethic neutrality typical of the scientist who is obliged to quench his/her emotions in order to result as unbiased as possible with a view to satisfying his/her editorial requirements.

During the WCPRR Editorial Board Meeting which took place in Beijing in September 26, 2006, the discussion also focused on your letter insofar as it discloses exactly the issues that a review such as ours must manage to solve: although the WCPRR is expected to be in line with "Western" parameters in publishing a paper (we are in the process of indexing our Journal in Pubmed), this does not however mean that the Authors contributing to it must necessarily become Westernized in order to have their papers published.

During the WCPRR business meeting, it was decided to add a section under the "Instructions for Authors" that might accommodate short papers focused exactly on the types of scientific contributions that you defined as "viewpoints or opinions" that, in my opinion, reflect the subjective capacity to develop the art and science of psychiatry.

Goffredo Bartocci