
Obituaries



Kamel Hamadah,
*formerly Consultant
Psychiatrist, Tooting
Bec Hospital, London*

Dr Kamel (Kam) Hamadah, who died on 10 February 1998, was born on 20 April 1929 and brought up in Cairo, where his father was a judge. He was one of a large family, many of whom were lawyers

but he was the only one to choose medicine as a career. He qualified at Cairo University and surprised his family by deciding to pursue the speciality of psychiatry. Following initial training in Egypt at Ain Shams University where he specialised in Child and Forensic Psychiatry, he came to England on a scholarship to the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry for further training.

In 1967, he requalified as a doctor in the United Kingdom. He then worked in Springfield Hospital before moving to Tooting Bec Hospital where he was finally appointed Consultant in General Psychiatry. In 1975, he joined the senior staff at St Thomas's Hospital. In all, he worked as a clinician, researcher and teacher at Tooting Bec, the South Western and St Thomas's Hospital for 30 years. His early work on cyclic adenosine monophosphate in depression may hold the key to understanding the efficacy of electroconvulsive therapy. His later interest was in the role of prostaglandins in mental illness.

He was a very shrewd clinician and it was knowledge of his balanced judgement that led, in 1980, to his appointment as one of the first assessors to the Health Committee of the General Medical Council. He was also an assessor for the General Dental Council, and he acted for both Councils for the rest of his life.

His teaching and administrative abilities led him to hold many positions at different times at the Royal College of Psychiatrists: he was a clinical tutor, deputy regional adviser and Secretary of the Southern Division of the College, to be followed by Chairmanship of that Division. He was also an examiner and examinations organiser for the College for many years. He was a member of the Mental Health Act

Commission from 1986–1992 and continued to be in demand as a second opinion.

The last three years of his life were lived under the shadow of illness, but he retained his equanimity and made the very best of a difficult situation.

He was very fond of Suffolk, particularly Theberton where he lived. With his stick, shooting jacket and flat cap he merged into the landscape and metamorphosed into the Squire of Theberton. The care and love provided by his wife, Brenda, was a great source of happiness and it was a powerful force in keeping him alive and in good spirits.

The motto of the Royal College of Psychiatrists is "Let Wisdom Guide". He himself was always guided by wisdom, which was his greatest strength. He is survived by his wife Brenda whom he married in 1969.

THOMAS BEWLEY

William Arthur Llewellyn Bowen, *formerly
Physician Superintendent, Bootham Park and
Naburn Hospitals, York*

Anyone who read the *Bulletin* in the 1970s would have enjoyed 'The Scribes Column' written by the mysterious Ezra the Scribe, who satirised the contemporary affairs of British psychiatry in ways that were funny, warm and sometimes potent. One frequent contributor was, in fact, Arthur Bowen.

He drew attention to a 'severe shortage' currently afflicting general hospital psychiatric units and especially those with professorial units. If not remedied he forecast that, "the severe shortage of 'suitable patients' (e.g. young, attractive, intelligent, co-operative and grateful)" would bring psychiatric services in the country to a dead stop.

He helped clinical tutors interpret the reports of College accreditation teams. For example: "Some consultants take an unusual interest in new and innovative approaches to treatment"= Some consultants are mad. And, "The ethos of the unit provides an idiosyncratic model of psychiatry"=All the consultants are mad.

In an article entitled "Responsibility" he accurately forecast all the turmoil that would afflict us in the 1980s about who is in charge of what in the multi-disciplinary team. And he quoted a legal ruling of the time that had we remembered it would have helped us remain

rational throughout the debate, for it stands the test of time today.

Arthur Bowen was young at 36 to become a Physician Superintendent when he came to York in the early 1950s. He devised a joint plan with the local authority Medical Officer of Health for community care of the severely mentally ill in the City of York. The plan was implemented. It worked and attracted international interest. It would have been the pride of any modern mental health service. The model of joint working with the local authority which he established in the 1950s and 1960s is exemplary of what the recent White Paper is exhorting us to do today.

Arthur Bowen bore with fortitude and humour the various reorganisations that dismantled his achievements in community care and abolished his leadership role as Superintendent. As leaderless consensus management took over in hospitals, he concentrated on other things. He was chosen to join the investigating panels of some of the early mental hospital inquiries (Lancaster Moor, Whittingham). It was Arthur (an early health economist perhaps) who pursued the question of why takings from the shop in an isolated mental hospital amounted to so much less than patients' spending moneys. The difference of many thousands of pounds a month was traced into the pockets of staff!

He was one of the city visionaries who helped found the University of York, which now has an international reputation for health science and social science research.

He was fascinated with the history of psychiatry, especially in relation to York. One of his party pieces was to take you to the very spot where Edward Wakefield broke the lock of a door

and exposed the degraded conditions in which women patients were treated. This exposure was one of a number of scandals which, in the early 1800s, led to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Madness. The ground was prepared, as the result, for the provision of the counties to borrow money to build asylums.

He often said the aphorism of a predecessor Sir Frederick Needham, Superintendent of Bootham Park 1858–74, captured it all: "mental illness is civilised man de-civilised". He demonstrated in his clinical practice that social environment, civility and respect for the most disturbed of patients were as important and effective as antipsychotic drugs in fostering recovery. Patients liked and trusted him, and he used his whole personality to support and help them.

In a lecture that might qualify belief in the therapeutic wonders of modern drugs, he showed that lengths of stay and recovery rates for patients admitted to Bootham Park in the 1790s with hypomania ('flighty'), with mania ('flighty and wild'), and with depression ('melancholia') were rather similar for patients admitted in the 1970s.

Arthur Bowen died on the 2 February 1998 at the age of 82. Throughout his retirement he had been a rich source of wisdom to those who followed him. He was never boring and added a sparkle to everything he did. Like Sherlock Holmes he perceived the unusual in the ordinary: "If the garden gnomes are lying on their backs you will know his delusions are returning", was his pertinent advice in a letter to one general practitioner.

PETER F. KENNEDY