

From the Editor's desk

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PUBLICATION AND PARTURITION

This section of the *Journal* is primarily written for readers; I hope on this occasion I can crave a little time for our contributors, our hard-working authors. It is not easy getting papers published nowadays and yet it remains even more of a priority that when the phrase 'publish or perish' first burst into public consciousness when coined by Logan Wilson, a former President of the University of Texas, in 1942. I have long felt that the process of getting original work into print is like the process of parturition, and I feel this in much more than a metaphorical sense. From the silent ecstasy of conception of data-driven thought through to the revelation of birth in the pages of a journal, we usually have a 9-month journey of worry mixed with calm, disappointment interleaved with satisfaction, and rank despair followed by the ringing tones of joy. In the first 3 months the submission process is accompanied by uncertainty and some nausea after reading the rude dismemberment of delicately constructed text. Later, the paper seems to generate movement and life on its own, and in the last phase when it has fully engaged the attention of the editors you know that the moment of birth is near. This month we have kept our promise to publish our UK authors' papers accepted by June before the end of the year – indeed, you will note we have done better – and hope that our international contributors will not feel disenfranchised.

Our authors in this issue have a lot more to celebrate with their shiny newborn papers. Look at the baby resources

of Nepal and Ethiopia and how much they need to grow (Chisholm *et al*, pp. 528–535), how computer-aided psychotherapy is growing too big for its cot (Marks *et al*, pp. 471–473), and how kids look askance at cognitive-behavioural therapy (Byford *et al*, pp. 521–527). And with the arrival of new-born infants there are lots of questions to be asked. Would they respond to the magically effective suicidal preventive postcards that seem to work so well in Australia (Carter *et al*, pp. 548–553) and which may reflect the positive interaction between life events and social supports identified by Casey *et al* (2006)? And, curiously and curiously, why should the new-born girls who grow slowly be more likely to develop schizophrenia than boys (Perrin *et al*, pp. 512–520)? Was Professor James Simpson fundamentally right in 1845 when he averred that 'the sex of the child had a marked and demonstrable influence at parturition due to the slight but decided differences in the size of the heads of male and female children'? This remains a puzzle and a paradox, and we have to note in this issue that not only do male children have greater likelihood of intellectual disability (Emerson & Hatton, pp. 493–499), some also have a phenotype of schizophrenia too, if the data of Johnstone *et al* (pp. 484–492) are replicated. But perhaps our preoccupation with the weights and measures of parturition represents unjustified speculation only (Osler *et al*, 2005) and what matters more is the interaction between genes and life events (Wilhelm *et al*, 2006). But let us leave idle comment aside and remember that the papers in this issue, whatever their shapes and sizes, are now starting on their lives with an abundance of

maternal fondness after 9 months of struggle. Some may prosper and some may fail but good bonding has now been developed after weeks of threatened separation from our referees, and if you do wish to criticise, be gentle and do not do so immediately, as in this post-partum period the parents are particularly vulnerable.

NO ROOM AT THE INN

By the time you read this there will only be 3 weeks to Christmas and the frenetic build-up to the festivities will be in full swing. For those involved in looking after the least advantaged in our services, the homeless mentally ill, those detached from their families through choice or neglect, and the many who satisfy the definition of social exclusion suggested by Morgan and his colleagues (pp. 477–483) as 'the enforced lack of participation' in this key social and cultural activity, Christmas is a time for sorrow and regret, and we have to do what we can to compensate. Opening up our doors, at all levels of mental health service, is one way of doing this, and at a time of closures of so many services linked to the gentrification of our capital city I note an increasing number of recruits to the Exclusion Choir singing lustily for an entrance. Can I ask you to join in:

Although we follow what we fancy
And are too selfish to be kind
We must sometimes turn around and see
Those of us who are left behind
A safe home for all our stragglers
A prize we have to win
It's still true for many travellers
There's no room at the inn

Casey, P. R., Dunn, G., Kelly, B. D., et al (2006) Factors associated with suicidal ideation in the general population: five-centre analysis from the ODIN study. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **189**, 410–415.

Osler, M., Nordentoft, M. & Andersen, A.-M. N. (2005) Birth dimensions and risk of depression in adulthood: cohort study of Danish men born in 1953. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **186**, 400–403.

Simpson, J. (1845) The sex of the child as a cause of difficulty and death in parturition. *Lancet*, **i**, 37.

Wilhelm, K., Mitchell, P. B., Niven, H., et al (2006) Life events, first depression onset and the serotonin transporter gene. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **188**, 210–215.