

Obituaries

Thure von Uexküll

A pioneer of psychosomatic medicine

Almost every German university hospital has a chair of psychosomatic medicine, German medical students are obliged to attend courses in medical psychology, sociology, and psychosomatic medicine, and more than 7000 beds in German rehabilitation hospitals are devoted to the treatment of patients with psychosomatic disorders. The unique position of psychosomatic medicine in Germany—in comparison with other European countries—is largely down to the continuous engagement of Thure von Uexküll.

His aim was to practise integrative medicine: organic and psychological problems should be treated together and not by experts from separate disciplines. It was his credo that no disease was solely caused or influenced by either somatic or psychosocial causes. Von Uexküll believed that the progression of a disease depended just as much on the personality, attitude, and the social circumstances of a patient as on his or her medical condition.

Von Uexküll's view of the human being as a system in the environment of other systems was profoundly influenced by the ideas of his father, the eminent biologist and philosopher Jakob von Uexküll. Born in Heidelberg in 1908, Thure von Uexküll studied medicine in Hamburg and worked as a junior doctor at the Charité Hospital in Berlin and, from 1943 to 1945, as a military doctor. He refused to join the Nazi party.



His academic career in medicine and the additional preoccupation with psychoanalysis and psychotherapy began after the second world war at the University Hospital of Munich and was enhanced by his experiences of integrated medical care in the United States, after he was awarded a Rockefeller scholarship.

In 1955 he became medical director, firstly at the recently founded University of Giessen, and later at the University of Ulm. This gave him the chance to practise and establish his idea of integrative medicine, introducing the psychosomatic view of disease to all medical and surgical disci-

plines. However, he only partly succeeded. For instance, some of his most prominent co-workers were committed to a more psychoanalytic interpretation of disease and recommended treating somatic conditions such as asthma and stomach ulcers with psychotherapy. Von Uexküll also rejected the introduction of a specialist doctor for psychosomatic medicine and psychotherapy, because he insisted on taking an integral view of the patient.

An important part of von Uexküll's legacy is the firm establishment of psychology, sociology, and psychosomatic medicine as obligatory subjects in the undergraduate medical curriculum. Recent reform of the curriculum puts even more emphasis on doctor-patient communication, further underlining the success of von Uexküll's tireless efforts.

After his retirement in 1976, he wrote and edited *Psychosomatische Medizin* (Psychosomatic Medicine), which entered its sixth edition last year weighing 2.5kg and 1564 pages long. Still fighting for his vision of a medicine that cares for body and soul, in 1992 he founded the Academy for Integrated Medicine in Stuttgart, which helps keep his philosophy alive.

He leaves a wife and a daughter.
[ANNETTE TUFFS]

Thure von Uexküll, former professor of psychosomatic medicine Ulm University, Germany (b Heidelberg 1908; q Hamburg 1934), d 29 September 2004.

Dharam Pal Singh Anhal



Former general practitioner Luton (b 1937; q Delhi 1961), d 26 August 2004.

Dharam Pal Singh Anhal, known as DP to his friends, came to the United Kingdom in 1962, and worked in east London and at Hillingdon Hospital before entering general practice in Luton in 1965. He built up several practices, with a total of 9000 patients between them. He leaves a wife and three children. [ROHIT ANHAL]

Errington Miles Blenkinsopp

Former general practitioner Thetford (b 1932; q St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, 1958; BA), d 21 September 2004.

After house jobs Miles Blenkinsopp joined the medical arm of the Colonial Service and went out to the West Indies, where he spent 10 years in St Vincent. Returning to England in 1970, he became a general practitioner in Thetford, with clinics in Thetford and Brandon, retiring in 1992. His enthusiasm for golf took Miles and his wife, Gwen, to Portugal in 1972, and they continued to visit there several times a year, building a house in the mountains behind the Algarve. He created superb gardens wherever they went. He leaves Gwen; three children; and five grandchildren. [W K BLENKINSOPP]