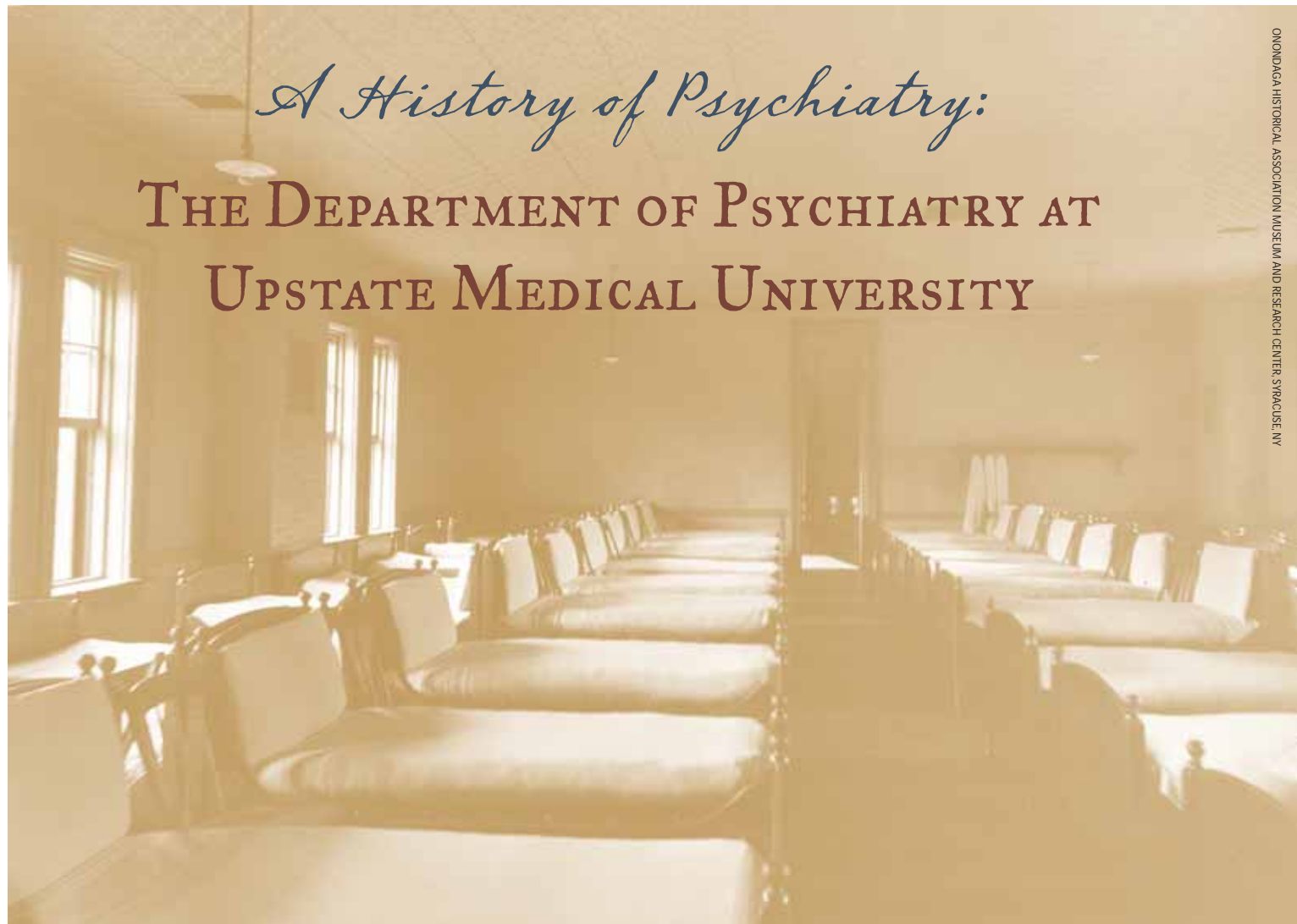


A History of Psychiatry: THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AT UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY



ONONDAGA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER SYRACUSE, NY

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The emergence and development of psychiatry in Central New York, like the emergence and development of psychiatry in every land in every era, is hazy. Psychiatry is difficult to categorize.

Is it a species of neurology, treating physical lesions with surgery or drugs, or a species of psychology, counseling patients in hopes of improving their emotional well being? There is some element of truth in each of these views.

Since the late 19th century, when psychiatry began to come into its own as a legitimate medical specialty, five distinct conceptual layers of the discipline have developed. They have not superseded each other, either

chronologically or logically. Even today they all co-exist, not always happily. These five conceptual layers are: (1) classical neuropsychiatry, which deals with psychiatric problems according to their physical lesions in the nervous system; (2) psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, the diagnostic and therapeutic methods developed by Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, and their followers; (3) community mental health, a consumer-oriented movement derived from social psychology in the second half of the 20th century; (4) psychopharmacology, the use of drugs as psychiatric therapy; and (5) psychiatric genetics, the very recent attempt to understand psychiatric patients in terms of their DNA.

EARLY ROOTS

Some form of psychiatry has been part of this medical school's curriculum from the beginning. At Geneva Medical College the treatment of psychiatric patients was first included as an aspect of the "Medical Jurisprudence" course, taught from 1834 to 1836 by Anson Colman, MD, a botanist; from 1840 to 1853 by Charles Brodhead Coventry, MD, an obstetrician; from 1854 to 1855 by Frederick Hyde, MD, a surgeon; and finally by two more obstetricians, George Burr, MD, from 1855 to 1859 and Joseph Beattie, MD,



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The New York Asylum for Idiots, 1858.

from 1859 to 1862. Thereafter, until 1872, psychiatry was taught under general medicine by Hiram Newton Eastman, MD, a general practitioner. These physicians were concerned with two distinct populations of patients, namely—in the language of their time—"the feeble-minded" and "lunatics." The general feeling was that individuals in each of these populations should be institutionalized as soon as they became either a nuisance to society or a burden on their families. Hence, there was emphasis on "medical jurisprudence," as the law would usually be drawn into involuntary commitments. But the main question for the proto-psychiatrists of that era was how to build the most efficient and most humane institutions for the various kinds and ages of "idiots," "morons," "imbeciles," and "lunatics."

One of the nine original professorships designated for the new Syracuse University College of Medicine in 1871 was in "Mental Diseases and Medical Jurisprudence." Hired for this position was the super-

intendent of the New York State Asylum for Idiots, Hervey Backus Wilbur, MD, whose title was "Professor of Diseases of Mind and Nervous System." In 1908, Richard H. Hutchings, MD, after whom the Hutchings Psychiatric Center on Madison Street is named, began as lecturer on psychiatry and Hersey G. Locke, MD, began as lecturer on psychotherapy. Locke died in 1922 while professor of neuropsychiatry and Hutchings retired as clinical professor of psychiatry in 1933.

In 1922, the entire teaching program in psychiatry and neuropsychiatry, which had been quasi-independent, came under the control of the Department of Medicine. This transfer was engineered by Wardner D. Ayer, MD, an assertive neuropathologist who had been in the Department of Medicine since 1919. Another new faculty member at that time was Eugene N. Boudreau, MD '12, who began in 1920 as instructor in neuropsychiatry. Since Ayer devoted most of his efforts to neurology, and since Hutchings was senior faculty, all of Locke's former teaching and clinical responsibilities were dumped in Boudreau's lap in 1922. Boudreau retired in 1946 and Ayer in 1948. Boudreau's autobiography, *A 50-Year View of Psychiatry and the Golden Years of Medicine* (1967), offers some interesting vignettes of this period.

Herman G. Weiskotten, MD '09, dean of the College of Medicine, arranged with the state to have a separate 60-bed psychiatric hospital built at the corner of Irving Avenue and Adams Street. It opened in 1930 as the Syracuse State Psychopathic Hospital, but later changed its name to just Syracuse Psychopathic Hospital and then to Syracuse Psychiatric Hospital (SPH), though all the while remaining under state authority. In 1931, Weiskotten brought Harry A. Steckel, MD, from the University of Pennsylvania to be professor of psychiatry and the hospital's first director. Steckel made sweeping changes, nearly all for the better. He succeeded in reestablishing the separate Department of Psychiatry in 1933. Before retiring in 1948, he expanded the teaching program and established regular psychiatric clerkships.

As soon as the College of Medicine became part of the SUNY system in 1950, Weiskotten and his successor, William R. Willard, MD, began comprehensive efforts to create full-time, robust academic departments, in order to develop the school quickly from a branch of SU into one of three stand-alone medical



Richard H. Hutchings, MD



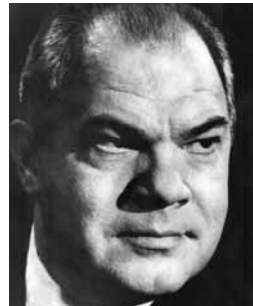
Wardner D. Ayer, MD



Eugene N. Boudreau, MD '12



Harry A. Steckel, MD



Edward J. Stainbrook, MD, PhD

campuses within SUNY. The medical professors at SU from 1871 to 1950 had been mostly local clinical practitioners who taught and did research only part-time. Under Willard, a true full-time faculty emerged, with prominent chairs such as Edward J. Stainbrook, MD, PhD, in psychiatry; Richard H. Lyons, MD, in medicine; Julius B. Richmond, MD, in pediatrics; and several others.

A FULL-TIME FACULTY

The first full-time psychiatric staffing was in 1952, when Stainbrook arrived from Yale to become the first bona fide chair of the new department. With Ayer, Boudreau, and Steckel gone, no effective leadership existed in the department from 1948 to 1952. Thus Stainbrook found a unique opportunity to build a brand new department according to his own ideas of what psychiatry should be—above all, scientific.

With a brilliant, inquisitive mind, an encyclopedic memory, and a deep knowledge of anthropology, Stainbrook was keen to bring to Syracuse the latest psychoanalytic, psychotherapeutic, and psychopharmacological advances, and the personnel to apply them. He involved PhD clinical psychologists in addition to MD psychiatrists and hired William F. (“Fritz”) Knoff, MD; Richard H. Phillips, MD; Murray Wexler, PhD, Upstate’s first full-time psychologist; and Grace White, MSW, its first psychiatric social worker.

Stainbrook was charismatic, compelling, and inspirational. Of those medical students from the classes of 1953 through 1958 who knew him at Upstate, a disproportionate number chose psychiatry as their specialty. Perhaps his greatest achievement in Syracuse was to institute awareness of the psychosocial and bio-psychosocial models of psychiatric practice that continue to be important today. He did this with a first-year course taught jointly by the Departments of Pediatrics and Psychiatry that studied the psychosocial and developmental influences on human character, personality, and behavior.

Among Stainbrook’s challenges was to coordinate Upstate’s psychiatric services and teaching opportunities at the new Veterans Administration Hospital. With far fewer beds, SPH occupied a secondary clinical role from the department’s point of view. He met these challenges, and more, but in 1956 left to become the founding chair at the University of Southern California.

Marc H. Hollender, MD, chaired the department from 1956 to 1964 and the department continued to grow and thrive. Among others, Hollender hired David B. Robinson, MD; Seymour Fisher, PhD; Bob Daly, MD ’57; and Gene Kaplan, MD ’57.



Marc H. Hollender, MD



Thomas S. Szasz, MD

In 1957, Hollender was additionally named to be director of SPH. The fact that he chaired a department with two teaching hospitals, one of which he now directed, caused not a small amount of stress. He expanded the faculty, moved departmental headquarters into SPH, and made SPH the center of departmental teaching on the model of the New York State Psychiatric Institute at Columbia University.

Hollender and Upstate’s most famous psychiatrist, Thomas S. Szasz, MD, were close friends. They had been on the house staff together at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis in the early 1950s. Hollender brought Szasz to Syracuse in 1956. Using their shared experience from Chicago, they collaborated to re-tool and dramatically improve Upstate’s psychiatric residency program. Szasz soon became the most popular teacher in the department, with 25 percent of Upstate’s new psychiatric residents coming to Syracuse specifically to study with him. It was a very upbeat time.

A DIVISIVE SPLIT

In the late 1950s, Szasz started publishing some very controversial material with wide-ranging social, political, and ideological ramifications. In 1961, *The Myth of Mental Illness* gave him an international reputation. His thesis was that so-called “mental illness” is not really a medical condition at all, but a subterfuge of government, religion, and society to control and oppress otherwise free individuals.

In 1963, New York State Commissioner of Health Paul Hoch (pronounced “Hoke”) became furious at Szasz for publishing *Law, Liberty and Psychiatry: An Inquiry into the Social Uses of Mental Health Practices*, and at Upstate for allowing him to do it. Hoch would have liked to fire Szasz, but lacked the power to do so. Instead, he did what he considered the next best thing, ordering Hollender to terminate Szasz’s teaching privileges at SPH. Moreover, he threatened to remove SPH as the department’s teaching center if Hollender did not comply.

Hollender was caught between a rock and hard place. As both hospital director and department chair, he had two bosses, Hoch and Dean of the College of Medicine Carlyle F. Jacobsen, PhD, who also had strong ties to Albany. Hollender resisted obeying Hoch as long as he could, then gave in. Szasz was appalled that his friend would betray him and allow Hoch to violate, as he said, his academic freedom. Szasz could keep his job and continue to teach at the VA, but the damage had been done. The friendship ended.

The split between Hollender and Szasz devastated the department. The psychiatric faculty and



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The New York State School, 1923, was, according to its 1935 annual report, “the pioneer institution in the United States for the care and training of mentally deficient children.” The school was torn down and replaced by the residential Syracuse Developmental Center in the 1970s.

residents felt as if their parents were divorcing. They understood and sympathized with both sides, yet still divided into warring factions. The department became tense and dysfunctional for several years. Hollender relinquished his dual role, resigning first the chair in February 1964, then the hospital directorship in September 1964, and finally his professorship in September 1966. From Upstate he went to the University of Pennsylvania, then in 1970, to Vanderbilt University, where he chaired that department until he retired in 1983. Szasz stayed at Upstate and retired in 1990.

Hollender and Szasz remained estranged for more than 20 years until the 1980s, an event known in departmental lore as “The Treaty of Phoebe’s,” after the popular restaurant at the corner of Irving Avenue and East Genesee Street where their reconciliation of sorts occurred.

David B. Robinson, MD, served as acting chair from February 1964 until September 1968, when Donald Oken, MD, became permanent chair. Robinson encouraged planning the Adult Psychiatry Clinic, the department’s first clinic service at University Hospital, an initiative that Daly brought to fruition. During Oken’s tenure, University Hospital’s Psychiatric Inpatient Unit (4B) opened in September 1969, and Chaitanya V. Haldipur, MBBS, joined the faculty in 1973 after meeting Daly, Kaplan, and Szasz at the University of Cambridge.

Oken resigned as chair in 1981 and left Upstate to direct the consultation/liason service at the

Pennsylvania Hospital in 1983. Sidney A. (“Bud”) Orgel, PhD, who had headed the Division of Clinical Psychology since Oken founded it in September 1968, served as acting chair until 1985, when Leslie Franklin Major, MD, took over briefly. Kaplan became permanent chair in 1986.

Kaplan had done his psychiatric residency at Upstate and joined the psychiatric faculty in 1961. As chair until 1999, he worked hard to heal the leftover wounds from the Hollender/Szasz era and to ease the various tensions that had been generated through Oken’s “top-down” style of leadership. Kaplan drew national recognition as a leader and innovator in psychiatric education. He expanded the department, revitalized the medical student and residency programs and the Child Psychiatry Division, created the family therapy program, new continuing education programs, new therapy seminars, and the Institute for Applied Psychiatry.

Mantosh Dewan, MD, HS ’75, succeeded Kaplan in 1999. Under his leadership, the department has substantially expanded its Child Psychiatry Division as well as its overall research activities. Together, they have achieved the transformation of the department into an “open society,” a marketplace where all kinds of psychiatric ideas, even some incompatible ones, can co-exist harmoniously. This openness has become the hallmark of the department. That such a large clinical and academic department can maintain such a diversity of clinical and scholarly approaches is a tribute to its present leadership. ■



Eugene A. Kaplan, MD '57



Donald Oken, MD