

Letters

Dear S&S,

I entirely agree with Frank Margison ('Psychotherapy in the NHS', *S&S* January 1999) that 'the human values that underpin humanistic psychotherapy [are] essential to the provision of an ethical framework for more general psychotherapy practice'.

Now is very much the time to hold fast to our fundamental values, which are, I think, emancipatory. Humanistic practitioners have always insisted on informed participation at all levels, be this in training, practice, service provision, or, indeed research. Much innovative work has been stimulated by humanistic/integrative practitioners and researchers. If we stand together more, we should have a more audible voice among all the stakeholders making bids for participation in the NHS. This is a good time to make use of the opportunities offered through the 'Clinical Governance' policies developed for the 'New NHS', which open the way for much greater participation in decision-making processes at all levels — at least in principle.

I also very much agree with Frank that making an alliance with users to push for the provision of talking therapies is a good idea. BIIP (the British Initiative for Integrative Psychotherapeutic Practice, affiliated to SEPI, the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration) has published an invitation to network, addressed at anyone interested in furthering such partnerships in participation. A BIIP consultation document is available, which has already had encouraging responses

from both the Department of Health and the Social Exclusion Unit.

If we are willing to learn the language of policy-makers in the current Government, the Departments of Health, and Education and Employment, we can push for projects on the ground which promote a more humanistic/integrative perspective regarding the role of psychotherapy and counselling in our society. There are many funding opportunities, especially if we focus on making therapy, counselling, complementary therapies, and any other appropriate help available to people who have traditionally been 'socially excluded'.

Regarding the current preference for funding 'evidence based' practice, it is as well to remember that, from its inception, humanists have also always advocated that our beliefs and practices should be underpinned by empirical observation inquiry. This was precisely what the humanistic challenge was all about in Italy in the 15th century, where scholastic and kabbalistic speculation was rife.

Today it seems to me crucially important to challenge the narrow basis on which criteria for what may count as 'evidence' are being construed. Contributors to *S&S* have long been at the forefront of challenging an understanding of science, research, and evidence which does not give room to the complexities of human experience and the political context which influences human interest and understanding. We have argued, ever since the sixties, that the methods and logic of the natural sciences do not and cannot serve to wholly reflect the human condition, even though they can help us answer

many practical, technical and theory-driven questions.

There is now increasing support for this more holistic way of thinking about people's needs and their experience of life. For instance WHO (the World Health Organisation) is running a research project in

collaboration with Bath University on how people's quality of life is best supported by adequate health care. We must be part of these important new developments, especially since it was organisations like ours that helped to initiate them.

Hilde Rapp

AHP Page

John Buckle

AGM Time

You may have missed the last AGM and only read about it. Do make a note of the next one: Saturday 24th April 1999. Full details to follow.

New Administrator

We welcome Sally Forster as our new administrator. She brings valued experience and ability to the post together with an interest in humanistic psychology. Sally has worked as a lecturer in scientific computing and gained considerable experience of administration as a course director at Southbank University. More recently she has trained as a psychotherapist in integrative psychotherapy and is in private practice.

The response to the advert for the post of administrator far exceeded expectations. It was difficult enough making a short-list but the interview produced such interesting, well qualified people with 'humanistic' backgrounds that half a dozen posts could have been filled. Unfortunately there was only one!

Conference Feedback

Stoke Rochford produced a positive response as a future venue — an attractive building and setting well adapted for conference needs with good facilities. But an idea was also floated — which gained some enthusiastic support — for a conference camp as being more appropriate for AHP rather than the formal, more expensive institutionalised hotel style set up. Was this a mild protest vote, or are there really a number of keen campers willing to organise such an event? (More details in the May issue of *S&S* — ed.) Suggestions for content reflected the range of topics previously noted in the 1997/98 survey. These could be summarised as: humanistic psychology — its future?; issues in therapeutic approaches; psychotherapy and spirituality; everyday life — humanistic approaches; social issues and responsibilities; health and personal development.

Within these suggestions there were demands for greater intellectual rigour from some and for an experiential weekend with a 'celebratory' feel from others. Every form of organisation of time was