From the Editor’s desk

By Peter Tyrer

**Lost but strangely found**

When my son was 9 – he often asked whether he was a vertical or a curly 9 – he went to the zoo with his class at school. This might be considered an event unworthy of report but for one small thing.

He was not always fully aware of his surroundings and frequently became detached from others when in a group. So when he came back intact from the zoo at the end of the day the first question we asked was, 'Did you get lost?' 'No', he responded brightly, 'everyone else did – but they found the right way in the end'. Several articles in this issue, including those by Shah et al (pp. 232–238) and Coleman (pp. 180–186) that may stir quite a few memories, reminded me of the zoo story, as we have strangely found again lost nuggets from the past.

An association between anxiety disorders, particularly when panic was present, and mitral valve prolapse, was first reported over 30 years ago and at various times has been felt to be a potential biomarker for panic disorder in dopaminergic transmission that also shows such great overlap with other psychoses be singled out specifically for a good or poor outcome by culture, income and geography? Gureje & Cohen (pp. 173–175) and Haro et al (pp. 194–201) address this question with its strange counterintuitive findings and move us a little way further along the evidence highway. Although selection bias probably has a part to play here, it is extremely bothering that people with schizophrenia from countries in Northern Europe, with its much vaunted joined-up community and hospital services, are not clearly associated with a better outcome than those in other, less favoured countries. One worrying and perfectly possible reason is that our treatments are less adequate in schizophrenia in richer countries because of an abundance of choice, consequent polypharmacy and more adverse effects, and when choice is limited or no treatment is given at all, mortality and suicide rates are just the same as for those who are treated.

And why does insight in schizophrenia return more rapidly in India than in Indianapolis? Where could we be going wrong?

Another strange reawakening is the report from Kisely et al (pp. 187–193) about the poor dental state of patients with severe mental illness. In 1938 the then medical superintendent of Worcester Mental Hospital, Dr Fenton, was very exercised by this problem, as dental sepsis was felt to be one of the major causes of schizophrenia and severe mental illness, so an ENT surgeon was appointed to the hospital. 'In our efforts', Dr Fenton wrote, 'to improve the mental and physical health of our patients, I regard it as essential that all new admissions should be examined by the dental and the ear, nose and throat surgeons for the presence of oro-naso-pharyngeal sepsis, and that all treatment necessary should be carried out as soon as is advisedly possible.' His theory, held by many at the time, was that this treatment alone was curative of the mental illness, and although it was clearly not, it may have helped more than many other treatments at the time.

When you read about strange and unfathomable findings in our Journal (and elsewhere) do not put them out of your mind entirely; park them somewhere where they can be rekindled.

**The Impact Factory Song**

In the 2010 journal ratings, just published, the impact factor of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* has risen to 5.95. My uncomfortable ambivalence about this statistic could only be overcome by a song, whose tune has yet, if ever, to be identified. Thanks again to my reviewers, who have been punished already by seeing an advance version, and to all others who toil at the Impact Factory.

There comes a time of year Which for some yields joy and cheer Whereas for others it brings gloom And impending signs of doom I refer to the end of June It's the Impact Factor tune Which we dance to the o' we fear Its strains may cost us dear In promoting our alliance 'Twen scholarship and science And sometimes in defiance We reject our weak reliance On the star by which we steer With each number crunching tear But we have to play the game As our authors will turn to blame If we fail them in our quest To be better than all the rest Now's the time to attest To the BJR you must invest And fan our impact factor flame By sending papers you can claim Really are the best And once published and assessed All will be impressed 'Cross East, North, South and West Let the world then bold proclaim Each author's new-found fame
From the Editor's desk
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References
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