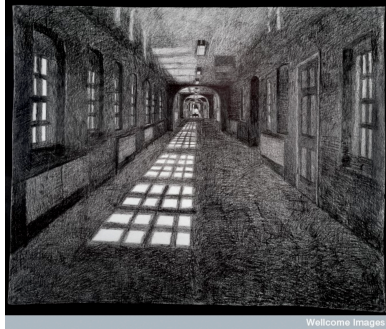


Migration, Mental Illness and the Management of Asylum Populations
University of Warwick
24 September 2010



The one-day workshop was hosted by the Centre for the History of Medicine at Warwick, co-organised by Hilary Marland, Sarah York (University of Warwick) and Catherine Cox (University College Dublin), and was generously supported by the Wellcome Trust. The workshop was designed to bring early career and established scholars together to focus on the relationship between migration, mental illness and the management of asylum populations. A range of papers, concentrating on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century asylum, contributed to debates on admission and discharge processes, the complexities of asylum management, and the management of particular patient groups within the asylum.

Following opening remarks by the organisers, the first speaker of the morning session was Rebecca Wynter (University of Birmingham). Her paper considered micro-migration and special integrity in the early nineteenth-century asylum, exploring the boundaries and borders associated with asylum therapeutics and structures and economics. Sarah York (University of Warwick and University College Dublin) followed with a focus on the management of suicidal lunatics and the prevention of self-destruction. She demonstrated how the desirability of prevention permeated all aspects of institutional life, influencing the conduct of treatment methods and approaches to patient management.

In the second session, Louise Hide (Birkbeck College) discussed the lived experiences of male patients within two LCC asylums – Claybury and Bexley. She explored the ways in which men adapted to methods of management and treatment, within an environment that was by definition contrived and artificial, and apparently running counter to notions of masculinity. Jonathan Andrews' (University of Newcastle) paper examined the management, meaning and conduct of post-mortem examinations at the Victorian asylum, concentrating primarily on the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, Morningside. He considered the development of the dead house from a marginal sector of asylum activity to a lynchpin of laboratory medicine.

The third session began with Carole Reeves' (The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, UCL) paper on Jewish immigrants in Colney Hatch Asylum. This paper compared the Jewish immigrant experience with that of the indigenous East Enders. Reeves illustrated that the ways in which asylum

patients were perceived along lines of ethnicity, influenced their management and prospects for discharge. Pamela Michael's (University of Bangor) paper considered migration and insanity in North Wales. This paper explored the possibilities offered by asylum records, including admission data and case histories, for investigating patterns of migration amongst asylum patients between communities and institutions.

The workshop's final session featured a presentation by Catherine Cox (University College Dublin), Hilary Marland (University of Warwick) and Sarah York (University of Warwick and University College Dublin). This paper presented their initial findings from the project 'Madness, Migration and the Irish Lancashire, c.1850-1921', exploring the migratory patterns of Irish patients through the Lancashire asylum system. It addressed the impact of Irish admissions on the four Lancashire asylums and the Poor Law system, demonstrating the extreme pressures placed on asylum managers and Poor Law authorities and exploring some of the solutions put forward. The workshop concluded with Nicole Baur and Joseph Melling's (University of Exeter) paper on mental health patients and readmission to mental hospitals in southern England. Focusing on the mid-twentieth century, their presentation offered some preliminary thoughts on the role of the geographic and social origins of patients, their period of hospitalization and the pattern of their return to hospital as readmissions.

This was the first of two events to be organised in association with the Wellcome Trust funded project 'Madness, Migration and the Irish in Lancashire, c.1850-1921'; a second event will be held in Dublin in 2011. The workshop was intended to restart what was formerly a very active and productive history of psychiatry workshop series. The workshop concluded with several offers to host future events within this broad framework.

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