

Editorial: Psychiatry and Exorcism

Professor Andrew Sims

'You are invited to watch a live exorcism carried out on television'. Such was the claim of a recent programme. Larry Culliford and I, both of the Executive of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group, were recently involved, as 'experts', in the recording of this programme purporting to show exorcism taking place before the viewer's eyes, with the volunteer subject wired to an electro-encephalogram. In practice it was much less dramatic, and gruesome, than advertised. The ritual took about two minutes, and the consensus of experts considered this to be a type of spiritual healing rather than deliverance or exorcism.

The point of my commenting on this now, in an Editorial, is that this is clearly an area where the opinion of members of the SIG, both as psychiatrists and those who take spiritual issues seriously, is welcomed by the media and the general public. It is a topic, which has caught public attention, even if morbid curiosity, recently.

Much of the strength of the SIG is the diversity of backgrounds from which its members come. It is highly likely that this will result in very different viewpoints on this particular topic. I would like to welcome dialogue on what is a confused but interesting subject, and where better to have such a discussion than in the pages of this newsletter.

Meanwhile, we are grateful for your membership of the SIG, which flourishes. We had a very good meeting on 'What Inspires the Psychiatrist' recently and we look forward to many more. It will be even better with your continuing involvement.

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