

Obituaries

Humphry Osmond

Psychiatrist who investigated LSD, “turned on” Aldous Huxley, and coined the word “psychedelic”

Humphry Osmond was at the cutting edge of psychiatric research in the 1950s. He believed that hallucinogenic drugs might be useful in treating mental illness and he studied the effects of LSD on people with alcohol dependency. His investigations led to his association with the novelist Aldous Huxley and to involvement with the CIA and MI6, which were interested in LSD as a possible “truth drug” to make enemy agents reveal secrets.

Was Osmond ahead of his time? His work was cut short by the 1960s drugs backlash, and only now is his work with hallucinogens being looked at with new interest.

Humphry Osmond was born in Surrey in 1917 and graduated from Guy’s Hospital Medical School. During the second world war he served in the navy as a ship’s psychiatrist. After the war, at St George’s Hospital, he and Dr John Smythies learnt of the chemist Albert Hofmann’s work with the hallucinogenic drug LSD-25 in Switzerland. They thought schizophrenia might be caused by metabolic aberrations producing symptoms similar to those from drugs such as LSD and mescaline.

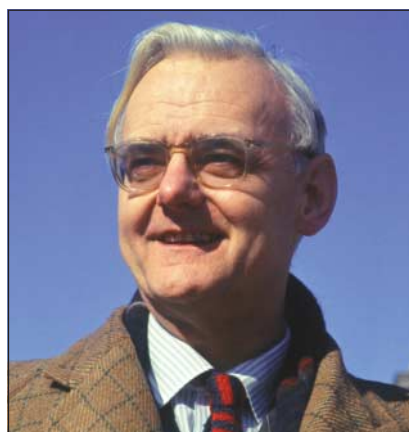
“Osmond was interested in a metabolic redefinition of schizophrenia as something like diabetes,” said a former colleague, California psychiatrist Dr Tod Hiro Mikuriya.

LSD-25 had been synthesized by Hofmann in 1938; he discovered its hallucinogenic properties in 1943. One day when he worked with the chemical he felt restless and dizzy and went home. Over the next few hours he experienced fantastic, vivid images with intense colours. He thought he had probably absorbed a small amount of the chemical.

During the 1940s and 1950s both scientists and government intelligence agencies were interested in using hallucinogenic drugs such as mescaline and LSD as a “truth drug”.

Osmond, the scientist, thought the hallucinogens might help treat mental illness. He later wrote, “Schizophrenics are lonely because they cannot let their fellows know what is happening to them and so lose the thread of social support. LSD-25, used as a psychotomimetic, allows us to study these problems of communication from the inside

and learn how to devise better methods of helping the sick.” Some psychiatrists thought they should take LSD to understand what their patients were experiencing.



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The psychiatric establishment was not interested in drugs. In 1951 Osmond moved to Canada, to a bleak institution called the Weyburn Mental Hospital in Saskatchewan, where he had good research funding from the Canadian government and the Rockefeller Foundation and worked with a biochemist colleague, Dr Abram Hoffer. The hospital had many alcoholic patients who had not responded to all previous treatments. Osmond thought that hallucinogenic drugs produced symptoms similar to delirium tremens. Producing a terrifying artificial delirium might frighten an alcoholic into change. Between 1954 and 1960, Osmond and Hoffer treated about 2000 alcoholics under carefully controlled conditions.

They were astonished by what they found. In an interview with the psychiatrist Dr John Halpern, associate director of the substance abuse research programme at Harvard’s McClean Hospital, Dr Hoffer recalled, “Many of them didn’t have a terrible experience. In fact, they had a rather interesting experience.” Osmond and Hoffer reported that 40% to 45% of the alcoholics who were treated with LSD had not returned to drinking after a year.

Osmond sought a name for the effect that LSD has on the mind, consulting the

novelist Aldous Huxley who was interested in these drugs. Osmond and Huxley had become friends and Osmond gave him mescaline in 1953. Huxley suggested “phanerothyme,” from the Greek words for “to show” and “spirit,” and sent a rhyme: “To make this mundane world sublime, Take half a gram of phanerothyme.” Instead, Osmond chose “psychedelic,” from the Greek words *psyche* (for mind or soul) and *deloun* (for show), and suggested, “To fathom Hell or soar angelic/Just take a pinch of psychedelic.” He announced it at the New York Academy of Sciences meeting in 1957.

But the climate was changing in the cultural and political turmoil of the Swinging Sixties. The use of marijuana and other recreational drugs among young people was thought to be a cause of social unrest, environmental protests, women’s lib, civil rights marches, and protests against the Vietnam war. “The money dried up,” said Dr Halpern, and new laws restricted researchers’ ability to study the drugs. “Osmond was at the cutting edge of psychiatric research at the time. It was a tragedy his work was shut down because of the culture,” said Dr Charles Grob, professor of psychiatry at the University of California School of Medicine-Los Angeles (UCLA).

Osmond moved to head the Bureau of Research in Neurology and Psychiatry at the New Jersey Psychiatric Institute in Princeton. His colleague Dr Mikuriya, later in charge of marijuana research at the National Institute of Mental Health, was puzzled that Osmond and his colleagues had psychedelic drugs available in their offices when local police had undercover agents searching for drug users. He found the answer 20 years later when the book *Acid Dreams* revealed Osmond’s CIA and MI6 connections.

Osmond later moved to the University of Alabama, where he was professor of psychology until his retirement in 1992. He leaves a wife, three children, and five grandchildren. [JANICE HOPKINS TANNE]

Humphry Fortescue Osmond, psychiatrist and researcher, former professor of psychology University of Alabama, United States (b Surrey, United Kingdom, 1917; q Guy’s Hospital Medical School 1942), died from a cardiac arrhythmia on 6 February 2004.

Philip Fairbrother Barwood



Former general practitioner Abingdon, Oxon (b Norwich 1912; q St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, 1938), died from a stroke and Alzheimer's disease on 16 January 2004.

Philip joined the Royal Air Force in 1939, and during the Battle of Britain he was at Newmarket, where the racecourse was used as a runway, and also at Mildenhall. Later he was posted to the Middle East and was in the invasion of Sicily and Italy. At RAF Wroughton he was found to have a lung patch. While convalescing he met his wife, Phyllis, a nurse. Philip then acquired a practice in Abingdon, which he took on single handed and built up to three partners. Predeceased by his wife Phyllis and one son, he leaves five children; 11 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. [GILES BARWOOD]

William David Doey



Former consultant ear, nose, and throat surgeon London (b County Armagh, Northern Ireland, 1912; q Cambridge/the London Hospital 1937; FRCS, MA, DLO), died from a heart condition on 12 January 2004.

In 1940 Bill Doey joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve as an ear, nose, and throat specialist and served on medical boards and in hospitals in the United Kingdom. His wartime service also took him to mobile field hospitals in France, Belgium, and Holland. From 1947 to 1977 he was consultant ear, nose, and throat surgeon at the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital, London and a lecturer at the Institute of Laryngology and Otology. He also held appointments at St Albans City Hospital and The West Herts Hospital. He leaves a wife, Marianné; three daughters, and four grandchildren. [LOUISE DOEY]

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William ("Bill") Guthrie



Former senior lecturer in pathology Dundee (b Forfar, Angus, 1926; q St Andrews 1949), died from adenocarcinoma of the appendix on 27 March 2003.

After national service in the Royal Air Force Bill was appointed lecturer in pathology in Dundee in 1954 and became senior lecturer in histopathology in 1967. He was a founder member of the College of Pathology. In 1982 he co-wrote an *Atlas of Surgical Pathology*. A football blue at university, he also played cricket, golf, table tennis, and snooker. He amassed a collection of Dundee silver and published the book *Dundee Silver 1750-1850*. Predeceased by his wife, Kathleen, he leaves six children and 19 grandchildren. [THE GUTHRIE FAMILY]

James Ralph Hudson



Former consultant ophthalmic surgeon Moorfields Eye Hospital (b 1916; q Middlesex Hospital, London, 1939; FRCS, FRCOphth, CBE), d 30 December 2003.

James Ralph Hudson served in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. In 1947 he joined Moorfields Eye Hospital as a clinical assistant, becoming consultant ophthalmic surgeon in 1956 and retiring in 1981. He was consultant ophthalmic surgeon to Guy's Hospital and held consultant posts at King Edward VII Hospital for Officers and the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth, London. He also ran a private practice. An expert in surgical technique rather than an innovator, he devoted much of his time to the diagnosis and management of retinal detachment in an era when sub-specialisation within ophthalmology was fairly new. The Duke of Windsor was among his many surgical patients. He leaves a wife, Margaret, and four children. [TIMOTHY FFYTCHÉ]

James Noel McGalliard



Consultant ophthalmologist St Paul's Eye Unit, Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital Trust (b 1956; q Queen's University, Belfast, 1981; DipOphth, FRCSI, FRCS Ed, FRCOphth), died from a heart attack on 19 December 2003.

James McGalliard decided to specialise in ophthalmology soon after qualifying. He performed his higher surgical training and specialised in vitreoretinal surgery at St Paul's Eye Unit in Liverpool, where in 1991 he was appointed consultant ophthalmologist. He served as clinical director at St Paul's for several years. He leaves a wife and three children. [DAVID WONG]

Deepak Mahabir

Consultant physician and head nutrition division, Ministry of Health, Trinidad and Tobago (b Trinidad 1954; q University of West Indies 1980; FRCP, FRCP Ed, FACP), d 9 January 2004.

In 1999 Deepak's unit completed a nationally representative survey of the nutritional status of primary school children, which gave the first estimates from the Caribbean region of childhood obesity using new international standards. In 2001 his team completed a population based survey of adults, which used, again for the first time in the Caribbean, recently developed questionnaire measures of food insecurity. He was appointed honorary senior research fellow at King's College London in 1999. He leaves a wife, Chandra, and three children. [MARTIN GULLIFORD]

John Tracey Scales

Emeritus professor of biomechanical engineering University of London (b Colchester 2 July 1920; q London 1944; OBE, FRCS, CI Mech E), d 30 January 2004.

From 1952 to 1974 John Tracey Scales was a lecturer and then became a reader at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH), London and Stanmore. During this time he developed Airstrip dressings. He then started the biomedical engineering department at the RNOH, and became a professor in 1974. The department became known as the Institute of Orthopaedics, part of the University of London. John Scales designed the Stanmore range of Total Joints for hips, knees, shoulders, and elbows. He was honorary director of research at the RAFT Institute for Plastic Surgery at Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, producing a low air loss mattress to prevent pressure sores. [P HAMPSON]