

In Memoriam Paul Wender

Neuropsychopharmacology (2016) 41, 3128; doi:10.1038/npp.2016.196



Most scientists hope their discoveries will revolutionize current views. Very few succeed. Paul Wender repeatedly succeeded, cutting to the factual bone. In the 1960s, psychiatric education was about the correct, all embracing findings of psychoanalysis. Many intellectually gifted psychiatrists headed for the Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts Mental Health Center (MMHC), with its luminary Elvin Semrad. These included Eric Kandel, J Allan Hobson, Judith Rappoport, Joe Schildkraut, Gerry Klerman, and Paul Wender. Psychoanalytic case studies were considered the only route to clinical understanding. However, this group on leaving MMHC became the vanguard of non-psychoanalytic research, breaching the confines of free association.

Most would place the burgeoning of Paul's career with his 1971 monograph demonstrating the reality of minimal brain dysfunction (MBD) in disturbed children. Further, against the conventional wisdom, genetic causality linked to a dopaminergic deficit was advocated. The MBD label fit the available data better than the still dubious causal implications of attentional disorder. His controlled studies uniquely concluded that MBD did not stop at puberty, but often continued into adulthood. Distractibility, lack of focus, and short temper benefited from dopaminergic stimulants. This syndrome is still undertreated. Use of a 'controlled' substance

as therapy is often resisted as addictive by concerned parents and staff, despite multiple safety demonstrations.

Paul's dissenting findings about other core beliefs are obscured by his work on attention deficit disorders. The impact of the schizophrenogenic mother causing schizophrenia was fostered by persuasive clinical reports, and held beyond criticism. The entanglement of genetic and environmental causalities could be dissected by cross fostering in laboratory animals, but ethically impossible for humans. In 1959, Seymour Kety realized that adoption provided a natural experiment. Casting about for colleagues, he learned that Paul, then a research associate at St Elizabeth's Hospital, was developing a sample of biological and adoptive parents of children who became schizophrenic. If the schizophrenogenic mother belief was correct, then the adoptive parents ought to be just as sick as biological parents or at least just as schizophrenogenic. Paul presented the first well-controlled test of the schizophrenogenic parent hypothesis at Kety's 1967 Transmission of Schizophrenia meeting. The adoptive parents had none of the supposed schizophrenogenic characteristics.

Kety and Wender's team were balked at by chaotic United States services. Fortunately, Danish psychiatry collaborated fruitfully. The brilliant, 'blinded' Copenhagen studies showed marked increased psychopathology in the biological, but not the adoptive, relatives of adopted-away children who developed schizophrenia. Later studies of affective disorder and larger studies of all Danish adoptees had similar results. The exclusively psychogenic view was still maintained by experts such as Ted Lidz, but ultimately did not survive.

Word limits prevent a more thorough enumeration of Paul's erudition, expository gifts, tart humor, and extraordinary Utah career. Paul never forgot the importance of educating the public about the real benefits from research, especially if scientists expected public support. In 1980, we collaborated on a book for lay people explaining biological views of mental illnesses and their treatment. A foundation called NAFDI (National Foundation for Depressive Illness) was formed to promote proper diagnosis and care for depression, which spawned the now-thriving American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology (ASCP). Paul's unique capacity for incisive clinical discovery, acerbic criticism, academic leadership, and public advocacy is gravely missed by friends and admirers of his manifold creativity.

Donald F Klein¹
¹NYUCM

E-mail: donaldk737@aol.com