

About psychiatry, science and life

Leo SHER

James J. Peters Veterans' Administration Medical Center and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai,
New York, USA



INTRODUCTION

First of all, I would like to greet Adomas Bunevicius as the new Chief Editor of "Biological Psychiatry and Psychopharmacology." I wish Adomas the best success in his work as the Chief Editor. I also wish Adomas the best accomplishments in his all professional activities. I also wish Adomas to be as great as his father, Robertas Bunevicius [1,2].

ABOUT ROBERTAS

I met Robertas for the first time in 2009, at a conference. I was immediately impressed by his outstanding ability to connect to people. When I was talking to Robertas for the first time I felt like I had known him for a long time.

Robertas was a true intellectual. His erudition was fabulous and the energy and brilliance of his work were widely respected. One day, when we were discussing research data I was truly amazed by Robertas' profound knowledge of advanced statistical methods which is very unusual for physicians. Needless to say that Robertas told me a lot of interesting things about the history and culture of Lithuania.

Robertas was a superior scholar and a superior diplomat. He held leadership positions in top international academic organizations such as the World Federation of Societies of Biological Psychiatry and the International Neuropsychiatric Association [1,2].

Robertas ran a group of young psychiatrists who translated the "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised" (DSM-III-R) [3] to the Lithuanian language [4]. The book was published in 1993. This definitely contributed to the development of psychiatry and behavioral sciences in Lithuania.

Robertas was a great expert in the field of psychosomatic medicine and psychoneuroendocrinology. His research reports, "Thyrotropin response to TRH stimulation in depressed patients with autoimmune thyroiditis" [5], "Mental improvement after replacement therapy with thyroxine plus triiodothyronine: relationship to cause of hypothyroidism" [6], "Depression and thyroid axis function in coronary artery disease: impact of cardiac impairment and gender" [7] and other works were very

Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge. - Stephen Hawking

important contributions to the field.

ABOUT PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE AND A HISTORY OF PSYCHIATRY

The division of illnesses into physical and mental is artificial. Psychiatric disorders are diseases of the brain. They are medical conditions like hypertension, diabetes, hepatitis, nephritis, etc. Psychiatric disorders, such as mania, melancholia and hysteria, have been included in classifications of diseases since the time of Hippocrates, and for over 2000 years were treated by physicians with the same kind of remedies, pharmaceuticals and attempts to adjust humoral imbalance as they used for other more obviously medical conditions [8,9]. The idea that insanity was fundamentally different from other illnesses, that it was a disease of the mind rather than the body, only developed towards the end of the 18th century.

Professor Johann Christian Reil of Halle, Germany, first introduced the term 'psychiatry' in 1808 [10]. He argued that mental illness should be treated by physicians. He suggested that it could only be the very best physicians who would have the skills to become psychiatrist. By the middle of the 19th century it was commonly accepted that the superintendent of any properly run "lunatic asylum" should be a physician.

ABOUT SCIENCE AND LIFE

Let's hope that the world will become more just, peaceful and humane. Every day, TV, radio, Internet and newspapers report on violence, terror and wars. Currently, 64 countries are involved in wars [11]. Possibly, human mental functions have differentiated unevenly: emotionally, the contemporary human functions almost like the Stone Age human, but human intellectual capacity has developed enormously [12,13]. Emotions control human behavior, and humans employ their intellect to reach their goals. It is amazing to watch how people create more and more advanced methods to study brain receptors and, at the same time, they create more and more advanced weapons to kill each other.

Let's be kind to each other. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. But true happiness comes from love and compassion.

Let's free our hearts from hatred. Let's give more. Let's expect less. Let's remember that life is not primarily a quest for pleasure, or a quest for power, but a quest for meaning...

Corresponding author: Leo Sher, M.D., James J. Peters Veterans Administration Medical Center 130 West Kingsbridge Road New York, NY 10468, USA. Tel: 1-718-584-9000x6821, Fax: 1-718-741-4703, E-mail: Leo.Sher@mssm.edu

REFERENCES

1. Dowbiggin IR. High anxieties: the social construction of anxiety disorders. *Can J Psychiatry*. 1. World Federation of Societies of Biological Psychiatry (WFSBP). In Memoriam – Professor Robertas Bunevicius. http://www.wfsbp.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/RBunevicius_tribute.pdf Accessed: January 30, 2015.
2. LSMU Elgesio medicinos instituto bendruomene. Habil. dr. Robertas Bunevičius (1958–2014). *Biological Psychiatry and Psychopharmacology* 2014; 16 (1): 2.
3. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised” (DSM-III-R). *Am Psychiatr Publ*, 1987.
4. Buneviciute J. Dr. Robertas Bunevicius: a pioneer of DSM in Lithuania. <http://www.internetandpsychiatry.com/joomla/home-page/editorials-and-commentaries/956-dr-robertas-bunevicius-a-pioneer-of-dsm-in-lithuania.html> Accessed: January 29, 2015.
5. Bunevicius R, Kazanavicius G, Telksnys A. Thyrotropin response to TRH stimulation in depressed patients with autoimmune thyroiditis. *Biol Psychiatry* 1994;36(8):543–7.
6. Bunevicius R, Prange AJ. Mental improvement after replacement therapy with thyroxine plus triiodothyronine: relationship to cause of hypothyroidism. *Int J Neuropsychopharmacol* 2000;3(2):167–174.
1. Bunevicius R, Varoneckas G, Prange AJ Jr, Hinderliter AL, Gintauskiene V, Girdler SS. Depression and thyroid axis function in coronary artery disease: impact of cardiac impairment and gender. *Clin Cardiol* 2006;29(4):170–4.
2. Kendell RE. The distinction between mental and physical illness. *Br J Psychiatry* 2001;178:490–3.
3. Hunter R, Macalpine I. *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535–1860*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
4. Marneros A. Psychiatry’s 200th birthday. *Br J Psychiatry* 2008;193(1):1–3.
5. Wars in the World. <http://www.warsintheworld.com/?page=static1258254223> Accessed: November 4, 2014.
6. Gottfries CG, Roos BE. Man’s emotional capacity—an unexplored and unexploited possibility. *Med Hypotheses* 1994;43(5):347–55.
7. Sher L. Behavioral genetic research: achievements and concerns. *Med Hypotheses* 1998;50(3):265–6.