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COMMUNICATION OF DISTRESS

Dr John Ellard

There are many kinds of injury and many of them provide a basis for litigation. Assessing the presence and the nature of psychological injury is not easy: the diagnostic categories

have their own problems. This lecture, given in Queenstown, New Zealand, at a meeting of the Section of Forensic Psychiatry of the Royal Australasian College of Psychiatrists, was directed at psychiatrists but legal practitioners may find it of general interest and of use in assessing the complaints of those who consult them. The pattern of illness in the community changes with the years. Poliomyelitis, once epidemic in Australia, is now rarely seen while AIDS has become a concern. Similar changes occur in psychiatry. Schizophrenia, common now, is difficult to discover in clinical records from before the 18th century. Its manifestations have changed in my lifetime. A consideration of the military experience shows that the consequences of severe stress have shown and continue to show the same metamorphosis.	246
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 - 5. Austin, n 4, p 56.

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