

Tribute to Dr Thomas Kraft for BSCHA

It is with regret that we announce the death of Dr Thomas Kraft MB ChB FRCPsych DPM on 10 December 2008. The following is a short tribute to a man who has influenced many academics and clinicians and who has helped to shape integrative psychotherapy as we know it today.

Having qualified as a doctor at Leeds in 1956, Tom held a number of house jobs in London. Tom was stationed at Aldershot with the PT Corp, went to the Middle East on the Heat and Acclimatisation trials, and was placed in Belfast, Cambridge and Oxford working at the Army Information Offices. It was while in Belfast—and here one finds an early indication of Tom's immense tenacity—that he regularly flew back to London in order to complete a course in neurology at Hammersmith Hospital. After national service, he specialized in psychiatry, working for Sargeant at St Thomas', and as Senior Registrar at Barts' (1971), before setting up in private practice in Harley Street (1971-2008), where he continued to work until three weeks before his death. As a consultant in private practice, Tom also continued to treat patients in a number of institutions including the Grovelands' Priory (1987-1995), The Florence Nightingale Hospital (1988-2003), Edenhall (1988-1998) as well as at St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy (2000-2008).

As a consultant psychiatrist, Dr Thomas Kraft had a huge and profound influence. He began work in the field of hypnosis in 1963 and did some of the pioneer work in behaviour therapy in the 1960s, writing case reports which re-defined the boundaries of how behaviour therapy can be incorporated into the treatment of psychological disorders. He used Wolpe's (1958) principle of reciprocal inhibition, pairing a hierarchical list of anxiety-provoking situations with relaxation and using *in vitro* systematic desensitization in treatment. He used systematic desensitization in the treatment of heat phobia (Kraft & Al-Issa, 1965), frigidity (Kraft & Al-Issa, 1967a), alcoholism (Kraft & Al-Issa, 1967b; Kraft & Al-Issa, 1968a; Kraft, 1969b; Kraft & Wijesinghe B, 1970), cigarette addiction (Kraft & Al-Issa, 1967c), wedding phobia (Kraft, 1970), agoraphobia (Kraft, 1973), claustrophobia (Kraft, 1973), sea sickness (Kraft, 1984a), balloon phobia (Kraft, 1994) and driving phobia (Kraft & Kraft, 2004), and he utilized these principles in many therapeutic situations combining them with hypnosis and psychotherapy. Tom was extremely successful with his approach and transformed many people's lives. He also introduced the concept of social anxiety being the cause of alcoholism (Kraft & Al-Issa, 1967b; Kraft & Al-Issa, 1968b; Kraft, 1969b; Kraft, 1971). As early as 1969, he wrote a paper in the *American Journal of Psychotherapy* in which he showed that psychoanalysis/psychotherapy and behaviour therapy were not diametrically opposed to one another (Kraft, 1969a). It was clear from these early days that Dr Kraft was keen to challenge and question medical practitioners, psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and psychiatrists, and it was here that he began to develop a form of treatment that was unique to him.

Tom realized the power of hypnosis as a tool in his therapeutic approach. He used psychodynamic psychotherapy in conjunction with hypnosis, and it was early on in his career that he minimised prescribing drugs in favour of uncovering the psychodynamics which were at the root of many psychological disorders. Tom knew how important it was to support loved ones in the family context: bonding is important not only for the young child but also throughout life. He also believed that it was important for patients to make their own decisions and that they, through the psychotherapy, should be given the chance to gain control of their own lives. Tom provided patients with that support, and with that therapeutic 'holding', patients were, from there, able to go out and discover and challenge

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themselves, utilizing their potential in their own unique ways. It was clear that he had built up a tremendous amount of rapport with his patients. Over the last few weeks, many patients have sent cards with fitting tributes to a great man. Some of the patients said that they would not have achieved a fraction of what they had done in life if it hadn't been for Tom's influence and support; others intimated that they might not have survived had it not have been for Tom's help.

Tom has written over 60 papers both in British and International journals and, during the past six years, he has written together with his son, Dr David Kraft. Apart from the work that he did on behaviour therapy and social anxiety already mentioned—of course, he always combined his approaches and made them 'tailor-made to his patients' needs—Tom also used hypnosis and psychotherapy successfully with the terminally ill (Kraft, 1989; Kraft, 1991; Kraft, 1992;), and with patients suffering from injection phobia (Kraft, 1984), hyperhidrosis (Kraft, 1985; Kraft & Kraft, 2007b), night terrors (Kraft, 1986); avoidance reactions (Kraft, 1988), chemotherapy phobia (Kraft, 1993), stuttering (Kraft, 1994), snoring (Kraft, 2003), various addictions (Kraft & Kraft, 2005) and IBS (Kraft & Kraft, 2007c). In all of these case studies, patients made excellent recoveries. He also wrote reviews in connection with anxiety disturbances and sleep disorders (Kraft & Kraft, 2006) and sexual disorders (Kraft & Kraft, 2007a).

He had also been a clinical supervisor for the diploma in Applied Hypnosis at the UCL (1987-2007) and had given lectures on and on behalf of the British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis and the British Society of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (now collectively known as BSCAH). Tom was influential as a supervisor and teacher. Many of his students and colleagues were fascinated to hear his stories and his unique approaches to therapy. Tom was a fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine (since 1959), a member of the British Medical Association (again since 1959), an honorary member of the British Society of Clinical and Academic Hypnosis (BSCAH) and member of the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration (SEPI). In a typical academic year, Tom attended most of the lectures run by the Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. He also went to lectures run by the Psychiatry Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. He continued to revise and re-evaluate his thoughts, ideas and therapeutic strategies from day to day, and he discussed these ideas with colleagues and with his son, David to whom he acted as mentor. Tom was progressive. He never stood still: he was always forward-looking.

Tom Kraft was an innovator in his field; a pillar of strength to his patients and friends; a scholar with an extensive knowledge of medicine and of psychotherapeutic theory and practice; a carer with an immeasurable sense of empathy and warmth; he was a loving father to his sons David and Christopher, and the special relationship that he had with his wife, Jane, will live on forever.

Dr David Kraft

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