

Discipline of Psychiatry

The Early Years



Before Memorial University, psychiatry residency training began at the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases.

*Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases
Courtesy of the Waterford Hospital*

In 1945, 27-year old Gerry O'Brien returned home to Newfoundland as assistant medical superintendent at the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases. At the 'Mental', Gerry O'Brien introduced insulin as a method of treatment, and was responsible for much of the clinical work at the hospital, including ECT.



*Gerry O'Brien
Graduation from Medical School -1942*

"Dr. O'Brien was soon joined by Clarence Pottle and Charlie Roberts. These three set the stage for the hospital's most explosive decade since its founding."

-Patricia O'Brien, Out of Mind Out of Sight



Dr. Clarence Pottle

Dr. Clarence Pottle was recruited as resident psychiatrist, and in 1952 became medical superintendent at the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases.

In 1941, R.O. Jones, a pioneer in Canadian psychiatry, had established the first psychiatry residency program in Canada at Dalhousie.

In 1952, the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases was accredited for two years of post-graduate psychiatry training, in affiliation with Dalhousie.



Dr. R.O. Jones

In 1952, Clarence Pottle was appointed associate professor of psychiatry at Dalhousie, and was responsible for the overall supervision of the two-year program. First appointed in 1951, Frazier Walsh returned to the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases in 1955 as director of the two-year residency program. In the late 1950s, the program was recognized as one of the best psychiatric training programs in Canada. Between 1953 and 1967, 42 physicians received one to two years training at the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases.



Dr. John Williams

After completing a four-year residency at Dalhousie, John Williams returned to Newfoundland in the late 1950s to work at the Outpatients Department at the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases.

In 1952, Gerry O'Brien left the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases and established what may have been the first private psychiatric practice east of Montreal. Initially, he recalls seeing patients in the corridors of the hospitals for \$10 per consultation.

In 1962, Charlie Boddie opened the Child Guidance Clinic and Daycare Centre in St. John's at the King George V Institute on Water Street east. In 1966, the unit was transferred to the newly-opened Janeway Children's Hospital.

In the late 1960s, in-patient psychiatry treatment was no longer restricted to the Mental Hospital and units were established at all of the General Hospitals in the City.

In 1966, the Grace Psychiatric Unit opened with John Williams as chief. Charlie Boddie and Doug Paulse later joined Williams at the Grace.

Around 1966, Drs. Freeman and Frecker opened the Psychiatric Unit on St. Ann's floor of the old building at St. Clare's.

In 1967, Ian Rusted was appointed dean of medicine at Memorial University. The medical school accepted its first students in 1969.

On the recommendation of an international search committee established by Dean Rusted, university president Lord Taylor announced the appointment of Dr. John Hoenig as professor and chair of psychiatry in 1968.



Dr. John Hoenig

With the appointment of Geoffrey Hopkinson in 1969, psychiatry faculty increased two-fold.



Dr. Clive Mellor

In 1970, Dr. Hoenig recruited his protégé and fellow countryman Dr. Clive Mellor and phenomenological psychiatry was introduced to North America.

Also in 1970, John Williams, chief of psychiatry at the Grace General Hospital was appointed to Memorial's Department of Psychiatry.

In June of 1971, Dr. Robert Mowbray assumed the position as professor of clinical psychology. With his appointment, the faculty now numbered six in the Department of Psychiatry. Mowbray would later author *Psychology in Relation to Medicine*.



Dr. Robert Mowbray

Uma Sreenivasan was appointed assistant professor of child psychiatry in 1974.

In 1974, the Waterford Hospital (renamed in 1972) signed an affiliation agreement with Memorial University. With the signing, all of the St. John's hospitals were now part of Memorial's psychiatry residency program.

By 1977, the psychiatry faculty had grown to 20. In 2007 there are about 50 faculty members.