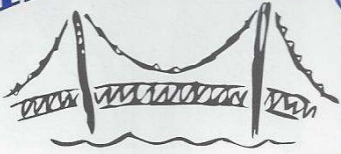


# THE BRIDGE



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## In Memory of Professor Israel Kolvin



*Professor Israel Kolvin – at the ACPP 3rd European Conference – Glasgow, August, 1996*

The death of Professor Israel Kolvin – affectionately known as Issy – on 12 March 2002, followed an illness he had endured and fought bravely during the preceding year. It was not unexpected, in view of his illness, but it was somewhat premature in someone who still had so much to offer to the field of child and family mental health. Issy's death brought very great sadness to all of us who knew him, and most particularly to his beloved family.

Issy Kolvin's interests and activities in the field of child psychiatry and psychology are perhaps encapsulated in terms of his role as Chair of the Association of Child Psychology and Psychiatry from 1994 to 1996 when he brought a renewed vitality and injection of ideas and ventures that expanded the Association's vision and activities to new heights. His influence was not surprising, however, given his wide acclaim at national and international levels in the field of child and family mental health. Issy's impressive and voluminous publications, and the never-ending invitations he received to give talks and lectures locally and abroad, were a clear mark of his standing as a researcher, academic and clinician.

Having obtained a BA in Psychology in Johannesburg, South Africa, he then studied medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand Medical School. On qualifying, Issy emigrated to the United Kingdom with his wife, Rona, where he began his illustrious career in child psychiatry, initially in Edinburgh and then in Oxford. By the time he had completed his child psychiatry training he had already made his mark with the publication of important papers in the area of childhood psychoses and had demonstrated the important differences between autism and schizophrenia.

In 1964 Issy was appointed Consultant in Charge at the Fleming Nuffield Unit, Newcastle upon Tyne, where he remained until 1990. In 1977 Issy was appointed to a personal chair in recognition of his impressive contribution and leadership. He had generated an enormous amount of enthusiasm and motivation among all disciplines in the department – psychiatry, psychology, nursing, occupational therapy, paediatrics and social work – and it was an ethos that continued throughout his years there. I was one of those, along with many other colleagues, who were to benefit enormously from Issy's positive leadership and his commitment to the advancement of research methodology and the development of projects in the context of clinical practice. Issy emphasized the importance of mutual respect and multidisciplinary teamwork in relation to both research and clinical practice, and he fostered a productive system of combining clinical and research perspectives. This was reflected in the setting up of specialist clinics in the areas, for example, of autism, speech and language disorders, school phobia, child abuse and

childhood depression. His unstinting energy and natural skill in stimulating both junior and senior colleagues into debates about their research and clinical questions was a hallmark of his ability to get the best out of them. He sought commitment and he expected results, but always through encouragement and support, and he always gave credit where credit was due. This resulted in many collaborative publications in books and journals over the years.

Underpinning the principles of good practice was Issy's sensitive approach of always trying to improve the conditions and lives of children and parents who were disadvantaged. He displayed more than the kind of sensitivity and empathy normally expected from clinicians. His modest and simple family background and his exposure to the injustices of the apartheid system in South Africa, as it had existed in his time, had left a deep impression on him. Those who had the good fortune to have Issy as a mentor in clinical and/or research practice could not escape learning from his compassionate approach to patients and their families.

Issy still had time, however, for outside interests. During his life he enjoyed golf, bridge, light jogging, following the fortunes (and misfortunes) of Newcastle United Football Club, and visiting the theatre and cinema. Issy also had a great sense of humour, but above all he was devoted to his dear wife, Rona, his two children, Jennifer and Philip, and his grandchildren, and was always grateful for the support his family gave him in terms of his career.

Inevitably, Issy's impressive contributions to the field of child and family mental health culminated in his being enticed away from Newcastle. In 1990 he took up the Bowlby Chair in Child & Family Mental Health, based at the Royal Free Hospital and the Tavistock Clinic, which he held until 1994. The occasion of the Festschrift in his honour was a mark of his enormous, longstanding and valuable contribution to the field of child and family mental health. Nevertheless, even after moving to London, Issy continued to retain research interests in Newcastle. The legacy of his influence still lives on in terms of his contributions up to the time of his death to a large collaborative study known as the '1000 Family Study' which spans many years and still continues. Sadly, Issy will not see it come to fruition. However, the effect of his work will endure as will our memory of a very dear colleague and friend.

*Trian Fundudis*