

# SCIENCE

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# LETTERS

## Psychiatry at UCSF

I am writing in relation to Marcia Barinaga's article of 10 December about the ouster of Sam Barondes as the chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) (*News & Comment*, p. 1639). Since my views and policies as the preceding chairman of the department were referred to twice in the article, I found it shocking that no effort was made to contact me for my perspective on my role in the described events, as part of what would ordinarily be considered necessary input in the overall formulation of the report of those events.

The reader should know that the overwhelming majority of the approximately 40 department members who appeared before the academic review committee that recommended the ouster, a significant number of whom would count themselves biological psychiatrists and researchers, would not at all agree that the central issue was a "schism" between a biological perspective in psychiatry brought by Barondes (and represented as new and state of the art) and a psychosocial perspective being clung to by the departmental majority and represented as old-fashioned and superseded. Nor do I agree with all the specific statements of fact. The nationally recognized work with post-traumatic stress disorders referred to in the article was not initiated by Barondes; it was inaugurated in the department by Mardi Horowitz a full 15 years before Barondes arrived. The current development of the center is an outgrowth from and an extension of that.

Most important, the field of psychiatry and of mental illness is extraordinarily complex and the locus of enormous human suffering. It is no help to the illumination of the interplay of the biological and psychosocial factors that, together, determine this suffering to present such an either-or dichotomy between perspectives that necessarily should be complementary, not opposed. It is, in fact, precisely the operation of this complementarity that it is the central problem of a scientific psychiatry to explore and to elucidate, and this is exactly what the article obscures.

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The accomplishments of Robert Wallerstein at UCSF should not be downgraded. When he was appointed chairman of the Department of Psychiatry in 1975, the motivation of the search committee was to amalgamate the Department of Psychiatry at Mount Zion Hospital with that at the Langley Porter Clinic of UCSF for financial reasons.

Wallerstein was involved in some of the first studies of the outcome of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis—an important and legitimate endeavor. After all, physicians need to know whether their therapeutic interventions are of benefit. In the new climate of cost accountability, this issue will be increasingly important.

The fault in this sad story does not lie with conceptual issues, but with the arcane politics of medical schools and the shortsightedness of deans and the willfulness of search committees at medical schools.

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**Response:** Robert Wallerstein's removal as chairman of the UCSF psychiatry department more than 10 years ago was not a central issue in my article, but was presented as background to the administration's reasons for hiring Barondes. The article focused on events that took place after Wallerstein departed. I did not formulate the notion of a schism in psychiatry at UCSF. This was the predominant view among the more than 2 dozen people interviewed for the article—including UCSF psychiatrists and leaders in psychiatry from around the country. Nor did I present this as the only view: The article also discussed the perception that the troubles arose from Barondes' management style. While Mardi Horowitz has been studying post-traumatic stress for many years, the program initiated at the VA hospital under Barondes is a separate program, with separate faculty, staff, and research. Finally, while Wallerstein's views may represent those of a majority of the 40 department members who appeared before Barondes' review committee, it is important to note that the department has more than 200 faculty members.

—Marcia Barinaga