Editor's Column

On my recent holiday I noted an interesting pattern. The island I visited was frequented by many different people from a variety of nations. The island itself had a history of being uninhabited and hence its present natives were rather modern in thought. The native language was English but of course it was spoken quite differently from English as we speak it. This was no surprise. What did intrigue me was the local dialect. It was incomprehensible to me. The local inhabitants seemed happy to keep this from me. When they wished to speak to a visitor they would revert to words which I could discern. Sometimes their meaning too would escape me and I would find myself stepping back and looking at the context in which things were said. This seemed to be the way in which many visitors coped, including those whose primary language was not English. While there was a deliberateness to this means of selective communication that was discomforting, I was more impressed by the relative power which one has through the choice of words. During my period of training I have experienced this *subtlety* of language from many sides. I have learned to speak with different intent; comfort, support, understanding, clarification, educating and enlightenment. But most importantly I feel that I have learned to listen as carefully as I try to speak. When we ponder the questions of the needs of residents in training it is to this which I return. By the time one finishes a doctorate degree we naturally assume that the person has excellent communicative skills. The nature of our work goes further than this, I feel. To truly understand the nature of our work requires more than these supposed communicative skills. It requires a far greater depth of human understanding, especially the understanding of interpersonal relations, which includes language skills. As I struggle to develop this skill in myself I think of how important my education in this has become. I do feel that residents in psychiatry need to be educated in psychotherapy. More importantly perhaps they need to remain students of humanity.

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