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ASSBI 40th anniversary commemorative poem

Reminiscence

You ask of times in distant days
Which now are dappled in the haze
How far we've come and where to next?
Have we advanced or stayed perplexed?

When we began so long ago
There was so much we didn't know
We had no clever scans to see
The brain and its complexity

We thought Piaget knew his stuff
Pubescent brains had grown enough
We'd settle claims and test no more
The frontal lobes without a score

And then arrived the CT scan
The growth of imaging began
Our role became less diagnostics
We spoke more than of the prognostics

They moved our task from 'where' to 'what'
And 'how' it impinged on their lot
The legal team were keen to know
If they could work or were too slow

Our tests were still of 'where' design
The 'how' we had to just 'divine'
The deficits were well defined
But what they meant was less outlined

I'm not sure we have moved on there
Our tests still have a 'local' flair
Ecology is struggling through
But more research is needed too

It's very well to say what's low
But much more use for us to show
The how's and why's of daily roles
And what might help reduce the tolls

The other thing that's changed a lot
Is knowing if they're real or not
We used to give a single test
Or use our 'nose' and guess the rest

The legal world has asked these questions
Where's the evidence for our suggestions?
We now know more about what's valid
Malingering or true 'word salad'

As diagnosis moved off stage
Rehab soon became the rage
We slowly learnt the brain is plastic
And real world problems far more drastic

We realised that most syndromes
Were poorly served in nursing homes
That all brains needed stimulation
Not boring beds and segregation

Professions too had separated
With differences so over-rated
The promise of the team approach
Becoming more of a reproach

My early years were more collegial
The teams were always quite congenial
I witnessed territories grow
And prideful lines begin to show

I still think back to happy days
When Jac and I learnt teaming ways
I think that's moving back on track
The team approach is coming back

And what of the emotional side?
That too has been a changing tide
At times we kept it well in mind
But then we left it quite behind

That separation still exists
The feeling phobia still persists
We still forget to make our goal
To treat the patient as a whole

So if you're starting out anew
I'll offer you a simple clue
Remember these are complex folk
Not just a brain to test and poke

Begin to learn your trade out wide
Let curiosity be your guide
Learn from all who've gone before
But set your sights on something more

And though you need to read the books
And know if research overcooks
The expert you must listen to
Will be sitting right in front of you.

Jan Ewing
Chair, Brain Impairment Publication Committee,
Queensland Neuropsychology

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