

(9) Max Hamilton (1961)
Lectures on the Methodology of Clinical Research
Edinburgh: E & S Livingstone Ltd

Preamble

The author, Max Hamilton (1912-1988), was a very influential psychiatrist who was renowned for his invention of the Hamilton rating scales for anxiety and depression.

Aims

Medical post-graduates can constitute the toughest audiences that a lecturer may meet. It is my experience that they are of high ability, have a good background of science, and because of their training in the art of interviewing patients, tend not to be over awed by a lecturer. I am sure that this contributes to their sophisticated and even cynical attitude to lectures and lecturers. In direct contrast to this is their rather naïve attitude which tends to put at opposite poles the science of medicine, by which is implied laboratory work and diagnostic machinery, and the art of medicine, which is essentially regarded as clinical judgement, based on experience. If this remark seems exaggerated it will be amply confirmed by a perusal of medical journals wherein will be found articles and lectures in which the art of medicine is counterpoised to the science. But there can be no doubt that clinical practice needs much more science than it has had heretofore. It is not sufficient for the clinician to rely on his empirical "experience" and ability to understand the patient as a human being, leaving the "science" to specialists and technicians. It is on the basis of this opinion and with this particular audience in mind that I designed this set of lectures and gave them first in 1953. On a number of occasions I have been asked to publish these lectures, but have refrained from doing so on the grounds that there were many good books already available on the subject. Recently I have been "going through the literature" and have been surprised how many books there were, and how very good they were. It is true that the number that deal directly with problems of clinical medicine is small, and it can be said of many of them that they are very much concerned with statistics as such and the details of computation. Books on the design of experiments also tend to be difficult. Perhaps there is room for a small book, one that is concerned primarily with clinical problems and concentrates on the logic and principles of the application of science to clinical research (Preface, pages v and vi).

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