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How favourably or unfavourably were the psychiatrists of New South Wales regarded by their medical colleagues circa 1900?

Background: In *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (1997) the historian of psychiatry, Edward Shorter, wrote that, at the fin de siècle, 'Psychiatrists themselves had a rather poor reputation among their colleagues as the dull and second-rate, just a step, if that, above the spadoctors and the homeopaths'. In *Masters of Bedlam* (1996) the social historians Scull, MacKenzie and Hervey characterised the public standing of alienists as 'fragile' and stated that their medical brethren might find them 'marginal and embarrassing'.

Objectives: To examine the reputation of psychiatrists in New South Wales, circa 1900 from the perspective of their medical colleagues.

Methods: The presenter examines the accuracy of the above quoted assertions about the reputation of alienists with reference to NSW in 1900 by examining local journals, reports and newspapers together with biographical material. Among the psychiatrists discussed are Frederick Norton Manning, Herbert Blaxland, Eric Sinclair, Chisholm Ross, Edwin Godson, William Cotter Williamson and Andrew Davidson.

Findings: The presenter was not able to discover evidence that alienists in NSW were held in poor esteem by their medical colleagues. He found considerable evidence to the contrary.

Discussion: The presenter addresses the question: If the medical profession in New South Wales had a more favourable opinion regarding its local psychiatrists than the medical profession in other parts of the world, what might have been the reason?

Conclusions: The presenter proposes that, in New South Wales, in 1900, the psychiatrists were generally well respected by their colleagues in the medical profession, and that several of them were held in very high esteem.