

# WHO 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Global Health Histories Seminars

LUNCHTIME SEMINAR,  
Thursday 17rd July 2008  
12.30 – 14.00, Library Meeting Room

## Towards a History of Psychotherapy

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The promotion of mental health has always been a key objective of the World Health Organization. Indeed, WHO's first Director-General, Dr Brock Chisholm, was an internationally-renowned psychiatrist. For individuals in developed societies, mental health has been widely pursued through psychotherapy. Yet psychotherapy presents itself today in a plethora of forms, with little consensus as to its aims, procedures and rationales.



This presentation questions how this situation arose. It reconstructs the rise of psychotherapy in medicine, neurology and psychology from the mid-19th century onwards in Europe and North America. It traces the rise of electrotherapy, hypnosis, moral treatment and transformations in medical and psychiatric practice. It explores how the term 'psychotherapy' increasingly became used as a label for a variety of practices, before coming to be perceived as a distinct entity in its own right through the rise of specific institutions. Today's presentation considers the contemporary implications of these issues.

Co-organized with The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College, London  
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