

Foreword

Loren R. Mosher, M.D.

Swimming Upriver

This collection of essays, especially those by Dr. Lars Martensson, will, I hope, open eyes, minds and hearts to an issue many wish to avoid acknowledging: the problems associated with the pervasive use of neuroleptic drugs with persons exhibiting disturbed and disturbing behaviors. Unfortunately, the money river from the drug industry requires strong swimmers to make headway in exposing these problems. Hopefully, some of what I say along with what's contained in this collection, will provide some muscle.

I was never a true believer in neuroleptics. I used them but found them not to produce Lazarus-like cures. My psychiatric training and experience taught me that a good human relationship could be very helpful to persons attempting to cope with serious life difficulties. Although I saw that what was defined professionally as psychotherapy could be helpful, I also saw that the hours of therapy were most often too limited to make a major difference in the lives of very distressed persons. So, in 1971 several colleagues and I created and researched a very special home-like 24-hour a day therapeutic social environment near San Francisco, California. We called it Soteria (from the Latin, deliverance or salvation). In Soteria House we unwittingly committed an infamous set of 4 Ds, Four Deadly Sins : Soteria Demedicalized, Dehospitalized, Deprofessionalized, Deneurolepticized psychosis.

By about 1976 the research indicated that this novel, community based, non-professionally staffed program actually promoted/allowed recovery from psychosis without drugs. This caused great dismay in powerful quarters. This could not be allowed. So, the project began to be systematically dismantled and marginalized. Withdrawal of its research grant funding and severe gate-keeping by journal editors were major factors in this process. Soteria House, sans research, limped along until it closed in 1983. (For a summary of the project and results, see chapter 9, pps. 113-149 in Mosher and Burti., 1994)

The fact that, for the most part, the Soteria project eschewed the use of neuroleptic drugs with persons newly diagnosed as having psychosis was the critical reason for the attack on it by powerful enemies. Yet, every person we did not treat with these very strong chemicals was saved from the deleterious effects so well described by Dr. Martensson.

In American psychiatry the Soteria Project is ignored. It is a study as if never done. It went downriver and drowned. Fortunately a number of Europeans spent time with the project. In 1983 Professor Luc Ciompi successfully started a Soteria replication in Bern, Switzerland. Facilities have also been started in Stockholm, Sweden, and Frankfurt-ander-Oder, Germany. Many others are planned. There is upriver swimming in Europe.

Now, in some places in Scandinavia, the original Soteria concept has been moved forward and applied to where severe distress usually first shows itself — in the family. The work in Falun described in this book by Dr. Martensson is an example. Family interventions conducted before the inexorable process of labeling, sorting, scape-goating and stigmatizing has begun, are being found to be very effective, without neuroleptic drug use, in changing family systems in ways that allow disturbed and disturbing behavior to be understood, related to and dealt with. Use of emergency departments

and hospitalization are now interventions of last resort. It is found that schizophrenia — usually defined as a chronic condition — is prevented by this normalizing, contextualizing, empowering family-centered approach.

If these new approaches, combined with a Soteria-like developmental crisis oriented facility, can be widely implemented there maybe hope for preventing more people from being exposed to the terrible physical and psychological toxicities that accrue from long-term neuroleptic drug use. The first step must be widespread recognition of their existence and malevolence. This collection should help this process. Then, perhaps a new river will begin, flowing with, rather than against, our basic humanity.

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About the author :

Dr. Loren R. Mosher is Clinical Director of Mental Health Services for San Diego County (population 2.7 million) in California and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California at San Diego.

1968-1980 he was the first Chief of the Center for Studies of Schizophrenia at the National Institutes of Mental Health. There he founded the *Schizophrenia Bulletin* and was its first Editor-in-Chief, and he started the Soteria Project.

Apparently the success (!) of Soteria was the reason Dr. Mosher was finally forced to leave his key position 1968-1980 in American psychiatric research.



Reference : Mosher L.R. and Burti L. *Community Mental Health: Principles and Practice*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1989.

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Our **HUMANITY**

**The Case against
Neuroleptic Drugs**

Lars Martensson, M.D.

**The Voiceless Movement
Mouvement Les Sans-Voix**