

Letter to the Editor

Dear *Cutis*[®]:

In response to the editorial by Silverberg, "What Is Psychocutaneous Medicine?" (*Cutis*. 2007;80:273), we also would like to express feelings of great loss from the untimely death of Matthew Silvan, PhD.

Dr. Silvan was a bright star in the small and unfortunately shrinking band of those physicians involved with the Association for Psychocutaneous Medicine of North America (APMNA). Indeed, we had high hopes that he would do much to advance the cause of this neglected aspect of our field. As Dr. Silverberg rightly noted, "there is an immense need for the study of psychocutaneous medicine in dermatology." We would add that there is an even greater need for the *practice* of psychocutaneous medicine, including an ability on the part of dermatologists to recognize and a willingness to treat the patients who are psychologically impacted by cutaneous disease.

The indifference to this aspect of dermatology in North America is overwhelming. Each year the APMNA holds a meeting prior to the annual meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology. The participants are the same faithful few, year after year—perhaps a total of 20. For the first time, the APMNA organized a 1-day symposium in 2007 on the day immediately preceding the World Congress of Dermatology in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The president of APMNA had sent out thousands of announcements of the upcoming event by e-mail that essentially went unanswered. Distinguished lecturers worldwide participated in the symposium. Although nearly 200 people attended, apart from ourselves and some lecturers, there was only one attendee from the United States!

In yet another attempt to reach our colleagues, we planned a day-long course in psychocutaneous medicine for the day prior to the annual meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology in San Antonio, Texas, in February 2008. We sent details of this planned course to the directors of all the residency programs in the country, but the prevailing lack of interest is clearly illustrated by the fact that we received, in total, 3 responses! Clearly, with such little support, the course was canceled.

In Europe and South America, psychocutaneous medicine is vibrant. There are professorial units

specializing in this aspect of dermatology, an inpatient capacity, and regular meetings with attendance rates in the hundreds. In an attempt to bring new life to our own moribund association, we are in the process of joining with our South American colleagues to form the Association for Psychocutaneous Medicine of the Americas.

We appeal to Dr. Silverberg and all physicians who read this journal to join us in providing the spirit and means to address this enormous unmet need in a more substantial way.

Sincerely,

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The authors report no conflict of interest.

Author Response

The loss of Matthew Silvan, PhD, was a great one and I look forward to reading the volume on psychocutaneous medicine that he was working on prior to his untimely death, which will further establish the field as an American discipline. Moreover, I believe that in the past 10 years, psychocutaneous medicine has been advanced through the addition of quality-of-life scores to many dermatologic studies.

As a final legacy, Dr. Silvan established the Psychocutaneous Medicine section in *Cutis*, which still exists. We invite physicians and other practitioners to submit manuscripts on psychocutaneous medicine topics, including case reports and review articles.

Sincerely,

Nanette B. Silverberg, MD

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The author reports no conflict of interest.