providers should be challenged with the question: how often do you offer care at home for your terminally ill patients?

Maddocks et al

Philately and the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*

To the Editor: I was interested in the recent articles from the "Stamps of greatness" series, reprinted from past issues of the *AMA Gazette*, containing the memorialisation in stamps of famous historical leaders in medicine. Few readers would be likely to realise the association between the hobby of philately (the study and collection of postage stamps) itself and the development of the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (DSM) classification of psychiatric illness.[1]

As an activity in itself, the hobby of philately is likely to have significant mental health benefits, such as enhancing organisational ability in a relaxed environment, as well as allowing the collector to enjoy the design and art of the stamps, and to engage intellectually with the value, geography and historical context of the stamp. However, the way in which philately applied to the development of the DSM is one of those chance moments that affect the subsequent course of history.

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Parker

William Menninger, a member of a prominent United States family of psychiatrists from Kansas, was appointed to the 4th Service Command of the US Army during the Second World War after the sudden death of the head of the neuropsychiatric division. Menninger commented that on his appointment, his commanding general, Major General Henning, had little use for psychiatrists. However, when Menninger made his first formal call on Major General Henning, he found him working on his stamp collection and was able to develop immediate rapport with him because of a common interest in philately.

Menninger also displayed other talents, such as playing the piano and exhibiting an appropriate sense of humour in gatherings of senior military officers, which further enhanced his acceptance within the staff of the US Surgeon General and increased his influence, leading to his subsequent promotion to Brigadier General. Menninger used his position to add a substantial number of psychiatrists to the Surgeon General's division.[2]

The acceptance that Menninger developed within the division also led him to chair a committee that produced the *War department technical bulletin, medical 203* in 1946, a document that classified mental illness in a detailed fashion for the first time in the US.[3] Menninger's interest in psychological factors related to mental illness, rather than the more narrow categorisation of the mental illness of people in institutional care, appeared to strongly influence the document, which later had a significant effect on the development of the DSM by the American Psychiatric Association.[2]

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Competing interests: No relevant disclosures.

doi: 10.5694/mja13.10172

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