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NEWS AND NOTES

Contributions to the 'News and notes' column should be sent to: Amit Malik MRCPsych, Consultant Psychiatrist, Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust, UK, email ip@rcpsych.ac.uk

Training in primary care psychiatry and psychosocial rehabilitation in Mongolia

Mongolia, with a population of over 2 million, has a per capita income of about US\$400, while doctors' salaries seldom exceed US\$1800 per annum. In mental health, some 120 psychiatrists are distributed in most of the 22 *aimags*, or provinces, but resources exclude the provision of basic mental health services to populations outside the provincial capitals. Vast areas of Mongolia have no mental health services, although fieldshers and primary care doctors are more widely distributed in most districts.

With financial support from the Board of International Affairs, Dr Parameshvara Deva, Secretary of the Western Pacific Division, ran a training course in December 2008, for about 25 physicians, neurologists and psychiatrists, who will then train other doctors and fieldshers throughout Mongolia.

College contribution to the National Conference on Mental Health in Iraq

On invitation from the Minister of Health for Iraq, a delegation from the Royal College of Psychiatrists attended the 3rd Iraqi National Mental Health Conference, held in Baghdad, 17–18 October 2008. The delegation, which included Mohammed Al-Uzri, Rizkar Amin and Mohammed Abbas, also took part in the workshops in preparation for the conference. The objective of the conference was to draft the Ministry of Health's strategy on mental health, and it achieved its objective of providing a vision for mental health services in Iraq. It was attended by more than 300 persons, including ministers and members of the Iraqi parliament, and attracted media attention. Holding this conference for the first time in Iraq

since 2003 was itself an achievement and a milestone in the recovery of health services in Iraq. The role of the College was acknowledged by the health community in Iraq, as well as by international organisations working there.

College's Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age

The fact that UK mental health services discriminate against older people was confirmed in major reports published in 2007 and 2008. In the 'need not age' argument for the organisation and delivery of services, the College's Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age has been vocal in defending the right of older people to access services designed to meet their needs. With other professional and consumer organisations, the Faculty published a consensus statement about need and action in 2008 (see <http://www.olderpeoplesmentalhealth.csip.org.uk>). This is a global issue. The Faculty is strongly represented in the landmark National Dementia Strategy for England, which was due to be published in December 2008.

Following a jointly organised conference in Dublin in 2008, the College Faculty is now affiliated with the International Psychogeriatric Association. The conference in Barcelona in 2009 will involve members of the European Association and an international bursary has been created to help overseas psychiatrists attend these meetings. Closer links are being developed with the Indian section of old age psychiatry and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

The Faculty has produced a new training curriculum and its website receives substantially more hits than does any other Faculty of the College. The profile of older people's mental health has never been higher and the expansion of a specialism for older people never more important.

Dave Anderson

Chair, Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age, Royal College of Psychiatrists

2008 annual general meeting of the British Indian Psychiatric Association

The British Indian Psychiatric Association (BIPA), an association for UK-based psychiatrists of Indian origin, but open to any interested psychiatrist, was established in 1995 and held its 12th annual general meeting on 14–15 June in Nottingham. The BIPA took pride in receiving Professor Dinesh Bhugra, a life member of the BIPA, to celebrate his election as the College President. The BIPA trainee award was awarded this year by Professor Sheila Hollins, to Dr Karthik Thangavellu.

The scientific programme was aimed at sharing contemporary developments in the area of the measurement of brain function. In addition to a keynote speech by Professor Harry T. Chugani, Chief of Paediatric Neurology from Michigan, other speakers included Dr Avdesh Sharma, from New Delhi, Professor K. N. Roy Chengappa from Pittsburg, Professor Diane Chugani from Michigan and Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar from Chennai. The next morning saw a series of workshops after the formal business meeting. The event was attended by more than 120 members, their families and invited guests. BIPA activities are reported regularly on its website, www.BIPA.org.uk

Ranjit K. Baruah

Immediate Past Chair, BIPA

Leadership and professional skills courses for young psychiatrists

The Association for the Improvement of Mental Health Programmes has developed a curriculum for courses of leadership development that is based on the provision of skills through a process of active learning and participation. A number of such courses have been held in low-, middle- and high-income countries, in the north and the south of the globe, in English and in other languages.

They are of short duration because it is often difficult for young psychiatrists to be absent from their place of work for more than a few days. The courses include a variety of topics, ranging from 'How to present a paper' and 'How to write a curriculum vitae' to work on vignettes presenting ethical problems and discussions about obtaining support for

a project and implementing it. A faculty, usually composed of four teachers – two foreign and two from the host country – spends all the time of the course with the students, thus offering ample opportunity for informal contacts between teachers and students in addition to discussions in the more formal setting of the agenda of the course. Professor Sir David Goldberg has been immensely useful as one of the foreign members of the faculty in a considerable number of the courses, but many other leading experts – including Professors J. Füredi, H. Helmchen, C. Höschl and M. Sato – have been involved in their organisation and conduct, and have made splendid contributions to their success.

The courses are being organised by the Association for the Improvement of Mental Health Programmes, a non-governmental not-for-profit organisation with its seat in Geneva; support for the travel and accommodation of the students and teachers has come from various sources, including several pharmaceutical companies (notably Eli Lilly and Company and Servier), universities, scientific institutions, governments and donations.

The next international course will be held in Singapore in February 2009.

Professor Norman Sartorius

President, Association for the Improvement of Mental Health Programmes

Report on the assembly of the World Psychiatric Association

Professor Sheila Hollins attended the Ordinary and Extraordinary Assemblies of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) in Prague on 22 September 2008. The College President, Professor Dinesh Bhugra, was an observer, as was Professor Hamid Ghodse, as a member of the Planning Committee. Professor Sheila Hollins presented a brief paper on behalf of the College on the global mental health implications of climate change.

During the general assembly, Professor John Cox, past Secretary General of the WPA, received an Honorary Fellowship for his contribution to the WPA. Professor Sheila Hollins, immediate past President of the College, received an Honorary Membership for her services to the WPA.

Dr Pedro Ruiz from the United States is now President-elect and Dr Levent Küey from Turkey is the new Secretary General.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence should be sent to: Amit Malik MRCPsych, Consultant Psychiatrist, Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust, UK, email ip@rcpsych.ac.uk

Ongoing changes in Irish psychiatry: trainees' perspectives

Sir: Your readers might be interested to know about the changes to Irish training. Currently, the Irish Psychiatric Training Committee (IPTC) is the statutory body regulating psychiatric training in Ireland. Alongside the IPTC, the Royal College of Psychiatrists provides accreditation and educational approval to training schemes

and programmes. There are currently 12 training schemes in Ireland, with approximately 500 trainees. The Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Training (CSCT) and entry onto the specialist register of the Irish Medical Council are awarded after 3–4 years of basic training as a senior house officer/registrar followed by another 3–4 years of higher training as senior registrar.

Irish psychiatry is presently in a process of restructuring. On 1 January 2009, a new College of Psychiatry of Ireland, autonomous from the UK Royal College, came into being,