

News and notes

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The Royal College of Psychiatrists is having a stand at the American Psychiatric Association's 157th Annual Meeting in New York, 1–6 May 2004. The College will be selling Gaskell books, demonstrating online journal features and displaying information about its various activities. Please visit Booth 1708 in the Publishers Book Fair.

Sessions for International Regional Groups

There will be specially dedicated sessions for the International Regional Groups (Divisions) at the Annual Meeting of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Harrogate, 6–9 July 2004:

- *Middle Eastern International Group* – increasing awareness of differences in training in the Middle East from that in the West due to differing cultural and ethical contexts.
- *South Asian International Group* – the influence of poverty and social change on mental health in South Asia.
- *Pan-African International Group* – mental health in Africa: challenges and opportunities. (Presentations will range from transforming traditional mental hospitals, reducing the impact of the apartheid era in South Africa to personal accounts of working as a psychiatrist in different African countries and of being a refugee.)
- *North American International Group* – serving the underserved in North America. (Themes will include rural children, comparing the severely mentally ill in New York City and London, and the plight of the elderly mentally ill in nursing homes.)

News of the North American Group of the College

The annual reception of the Group will be held at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in New York City on Sunday 2 May 2004 in the New York Hilton Hotel from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. All members and friends of the College are invited.

The Group has also organised a symposium and a workshop with international members of the Royal College. The symposium is entitled 'Psychiatric services around the world with a shortage of psychiatrists' and will feature speakers from Kenya, Pakistan, Egypt, England and New York. The workshop (with video) is on psychiatry in Afghanistan and Afghan refugees, and will feature speakers from Pakistan and Afghanistan. The workshop is scheduled for the Thursday morning (6 May) and the symposium for that afternoon, both at the Marriott Marquis Hotel (all functions should, however, be rechecked in the official programmes).

Presidents of National and European Psychiatric Organisations

The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Presidents of National and European Psychiatric Organisations will take place on

Wednesday 14 April in Geneva, before the conference of the Association of European Psychiatrists. The theme will be 'Psychiatric services focused on a community: challenges for the training of future psychiatrists'. This annual meeting considers not only the content of a theme such as training, but also how psychiatric organisations can learn from one another how best to develop in such a way as to support the profession and the continuing development of their members.

The role of health economics in mental health policy in low- and middle-income countries

A joint conference held on 30 May 2003 in London by the Office of Health Economics, Institute of Psychiatry and London School of Economics, and funded by the Department for International Development, has been published as a briefing paper (and is on the web at www.ohe.org).

The purpose of the conference was to locate and promote the role of health economics in mental health policy in low- and middle-income countries. Health economists have a growing voice in health policy development. But just as it is only recently that mental health policy specifically has been highlighted on the global stage, with the WHO's 2001 *World Health Report*, so too has the economics of mental health only comparatively recently started to claim attention on the global policy stage.

The conference brought together approximately 100 economists, health professionals and policy makers from a great many countries. The participants heard and discussed presentations from prominent practitioners in the field of mental health economics and policy in a global context. Highlights from those presentations and discussions are set out in the briefing paper. Together, they amount to a primer in mental health economics and policy in low- and middle-income countries.

Information supplied by Professor Rachel Jenkins

The second annual conference of the British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association (BPPA)

The conference was held in Watford in October 2003 and had delegates from the UK, the USA and Pakistan. Representatives of the British Indian Psychiatric Association, the British Sri Lankan Psychiatrists Association and the British Arab Psychiatrists Associations also attended.

Dr Mateen Durrani (BPPA Secretary) welcomed the delegates. The keynote address was followed by an address from the President of the Royal College of

Psychiatrists, Dr Mike Shooter. The chairperson of the BPPA, Dr Akmal Makhdum, presented his report on the progress of the organisation during the past year.

On the first day, chaired by Professor Bhugra, interesting and original scientific papers were presented by Dr Atif Rahman, Dr Safi ullah Afghan and Dr Ahmed. Dr Rahman presented results of his project from rural areas of Pakistan on maternal mental health and its effect on the newborn's physical health. Dr Afghan discussed the economic evaluation of mental health needs in developing countries. Other eminent speakers in this session were Professor Allan Young and Professor R N Mohan.

The second day of the conference was dedicated to trainee members of the BPPA. Issues related to the MRCPsych examination, job interviews and the preparation of a curriculum vitae were discussed. Special interest was expressed by participants in the research session for psychiatric trainees.

A well attended banquet and musical evening were also witnessed by Dr Maleeha Lodhi, High Commissioner of Pakistan to UK, and Dr and Mrs Mike Shooter.

The BPPA will meet again in 2004 in London.

Report prepared by Dr Tayyeb Tahir

Early interventions in psychosis

Early interventions are now a focus of international attention and the next international conference on this topic, in Vancouver in September 2004, will highlight continued advances in the full spectrum of biological, epidemiological, psychological and sociological research into early psychosis, with the aim of translating the new evidence into clinical advances that will enhance prevention, care and recovery, and into the necessary changes in mental health care delivery internationally. See 'Forthcoming international events'.

Jean Delay Prize

The Jean Delay Prize is the most important award of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA). Jean Delay was the President of the first World Congress of Psychiatry (Paris, 1950) and the first President of the Association. He introduced chlorpromazine in the treatment of psychotic disorders and was the first to describe the antidepressant effect of isoniazide, both in 1952. Jean Delay was a great scientist and humanist. He was followed by very eminent disciples, such as Pierre Pichot, Pierre Denicker and Raymond Sadoun.

The Jean Delay Prize is awarded to any individual who has made a major contribution to the biological, psychological or social aspects of psychiatry or to building bridges between them.

The prize consists of a diploma, a medal and a cheque for €40 000 and the awardee has to commit him-/herself to deliver a plenary lecture at the World Congress

of Psychiatry. Nominations for the 2005 Prize must be returned by 1 November 2004 and can be found on the WPA website (www.wpanet.org).

Previous winners have been Sir David Goldberg (UK) (1999) and Hagop Akiskal (USA) (2002).

The Sri Lankan Forum on Mental Health in Old Age

The Forum was launched as a collaborative project in August 2003, at the South East Asian Psychiatric Conference, as a partnership between the Department of Health, medical faculties, the Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK and governmental organisations. The aims of the Forum are to promote positive mental health, to promote awareness of mental illness, to support all training initiatives and to develop a comprehensive high-quality mental health service for older people and their carers.

The demographic changes in Sri Lanka closely mirror what has happened in the UK in the past quarter of a century. At present there are no specific services for the elderly. Dr T. Elliott, Member of the Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry in the UK, Dr B. Somasunderam, Chairman of the Sri Lankan Psychiatric Association UK and I as Chairman of the Forum will be leading the work over the next 5 years on a voluntary basis.

*Report prepared by Pearl Hettiaratchy OBE FRCPsych
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Medicinal plants in psychiatry

An international conference on the use of medicinal plants in psychiatry was held in Brazil in December 2003. This was the first conference on this particular issue and was very well attended by psychiatrists, pharmacologists and other mental health and health care professionals. The organiser was Professor Elisaldo Carlini. For many centuries medicinal plants have been used in medicine and psychiatry and there is continuing use in many parts of the world, although data are lacking on their effectiveness. The conference examined this and many other related issues.

VSO placements for consultants

A mental health unit in Sri Lanka, which already has an occupational therapist and a psychiatric nurse, is seeking senior medical support under the auspices of VSO. The unit would like one 6-month volunteer for September 2004, followed by another for a further 6 months. This may be an attractive opportunity for retired consultants. Applications/enquiries should be made to: margaret.english@vso.org.uk

These placements are in addition to 1-year Fellowships currently available for specialist registrars in psychiatry (approved for training).