

Box 2 Components of a culturally sensitive mental health service for indigenous Australians

- 1 Increasing cultural competencies among mental health professionals (e.g. interviewing skills, cultural etiquette) to reduce the cultural disparity between client and practitioner
- 2 Developing and utilising culturally appropriate diagnostic tools (e.g. the Westerman Aboriginal Symptom Checklist, WASC)
- 3 Increasing mental health literacy by incorporating culture-specific models of illness in management
- 4 Utilising cultural consultants, Aboriginal mental health workers and community elders as standard practice throughout mental health services working with indigenous people
- 5 Incorporating culturally appropriate treatment options, which may include traditional methods of healing, at an appropriate level

Adapted from Westerman (2004).

throughout the country against the legislation, which has nonetheless been backed by the new government. The United Nations independent envoy, Professor James Anaya, was reported as saying on 27 August 2009 that Australia is breaching its international human rights obligations by continuing the Northern Territory intervention:

In my opinion, as currently configured and carried out, the emergency response is incompatible with Australia's obligations under the convention of elimination of forms of racial discrimination and the international convention on political rights. (See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/27/2668915.htm>)

Australia was also one of the four countries that voted against the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (which sets out the individual and collective rights of the world's 370 million native peoples) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2007, although 143 countries voted for it. (On 3 April 2009 Australia did in fact reverse its previous policy and backed the Declaration, which is, however, not legally binding.)

Without political cooperation, a collective change in the societal psyche acknowledging the trauma and grief, and without social inclusion, it is difficult to see how the current negative health status can be reversed. If the current trend persists, Australia is staring at the disappearance of one of the most ancient cultural heritages in the world.

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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

College African Division's session at the WPA regional meeting

From 22 to 24 October 2009, a regional meeting of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) is due to take place, hosted jointly by the African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professionals (AAPAP) and the Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria (APN), in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. The theme of the conference is 'Scaling Up and Reaching Down: Addressing Unmet Need For Service'. The sub-themes will focus on gender, poverty, HIV/AIDS and human rights.

It is certain to be a very special event, with psychiatrists and mental health workers expected from Africa, Europe, the USA and elsewhere. There will be a special Royal College of Psychiatrists session during the conference. There will be special programmes, such as a health policy roundtable, involving the ministers of health of countries in the region. There will also be a leadership training workshop for young psychiatrists, a training workshop on child and adolescent mental health, and a workshop on research methodology. Visitors will be able to enjoy guided tours of the scenic city of Abuja and surrounding areas. For more information, visit the conference website, <http://www.nomadafrica.com/wpinfo>.

European Pact on Mental Health and Well-Being

In June 2008, the European Pact on Mental Health and Well-Being, an intersectoral statement on mental health action in Europe, was launched at the High Level Conference 'Together for Mental Health and Well-Being' by the European Commissioner for Health. The Pact focuses on five thematic priority areas:

- prevention of depression and suicide
- youth, education and mental health
- mental health in workplace settings
- mental health and older people
- combating stigma and social exclusion.

Preparations for the High Level Conference included the writing of four background papers (consensus papers) in four of the priority areas, as well as a research paper on the fifth priority area. The papers were produced through a consultation process which aimed to include as many and as varied stakeholders in each priority area as possible.

The Pact is now entering its implementation phase, in which stakeholders and policy makers in each of the five areas are encouraged to promote mental health and well-being. This will continue through 2009 and 2010.

The Pact will be implemented through a series of five thematic conferences in each of the priority areas, which will be hosted by member states in partnership with European Commission bodies and other stakeholders.

- 29–30 September 2009, Mental Health in Youth and Education, Stockholm, Sweden
- 10–11 December 2009, Prevention of Depression and Suicide, Budapest, Hungary
- 21–22 April 2010, Mental Health in Older People, Madrid, Spain
- 8–9 November 2010, Mental Health in Workplace Settings, Berlin, Germany
- second semester 2010, Combating Stigma and Social Exclusion (details to be confirmed).

A wide variety of stakeholders and experts will be asked to engage with the process and get involved in these events.

Further information is available at <http://www.ec-mental-health-process.net/index.html> and http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/mental_health_en.htm.

Hong Kong College of Psychiatrists

The Hong Kong College of Psychiatrists is one of the 15 constituent colleges of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, which is the statutory body responsible for overseeing the provision of specialist training and continuing medical education. The objectives of the College include:

- to promote the study and advancement of the science and practice of psychiatry and ancillary sciences and branches of medicine
- to contribute to the improvement of mental healthcare for Hong Kong citizens through the provision of specially trained psychiatrists
- to ensure the highest professional standard of competence and ethical integrity in psychiatry.

This year, the Hong Kong College of Psychiatrists, in collaboration with the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, University of London and Department of Psychiatry, University of Hong Kong, have co-organised the First Southeast Asia Maudsley Forum, scheduled for 3–5 December 2009 in Hong Kong. The course offers a friendly environment in which to learn about advances in psychiatric research. Similar courses have been established for a decade at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, and more recently also in Italy. The course is designed for junior specialists, psychiatric trainees and clinical psychologists. The programme will comprise a series of informal seminars focused on current research in a number of fields in psychiatry and clinical psychology. A panel of over 12 distinguished overseas and local clinician-scientists will discuss the most recent developments in clinical and academic psychiatry in an interactive setting. We hope that one outcome may be the establishment of future collaborations across Asia and the world.

News from the College Middle Eastern Division

The Middle Eastern Division announces the forthcoming regional meeting 'Mental Health: The Way Forward', to be held in Baghdad, 12–14 November 2009. For further information please email sabahsadiq@gmail.com.

Following a visit to Baghdad in July 2009 by Professor Robert Howard, Dean of the College, an agreement was reached with the Iraqi Council for Medical Specialisations to establish Baghdad as a training and examination centre for the international membership. Collaborative work is continuing with the College officers to put systems in place.

New mental health law in Egypt

In May 2009, the Egyptian Parliament adopted the new Law for the Care of Mental Patients. Mental health law reform is particularly timely in Egypt, given the country's ratification in April 2008 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which includes rights provisions for persons with mental health disabilities.

A civil society organisation, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, participated in a vigorous advocacy campaign with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the new law protects the rights of people with mental health disabilities. The Ministry of Health, through the Mental Health Secretariat, is committed to finalising the code of practice for the legislation by November 2009, with the following provisions:

- tight legal criteria specifying the circumstances in which a person can be detained in mental health institutions
- the right of a detained patient to have the lawfulness of detention reviewed by a local court
- an obligation upon mental health institutions to notify the public prosecutor within 24 hours of the involuntary admission of a patient
- a right to consent to treatment for 'voluntary' patients
- a requirement that doctors document and periodically review treatment plans
- a more restrictive definition of the circumstances in which solitary confinement and physical restraints can be used

- a bill of rights for patients in mental health facilities
- an obligation on mental health facilities to inform patients of their rights
- the creation of a patients' rights committee in every mental health facility to monitor the human rights of people receiving treatment in those institutions
- an explicit stipulation of the participation of civil society organisations in these patients' rights committees
- a range of sanctions for service providers who violate patients' rights
- monitoring bodies providing an independent review of involuntary admissions
- the establishment of a mental health fund to ensure sustainable financing for mental healthcare, including capacity building for those working in mental health.

Master's degree in mental health policy and services

The International Master on Mental Health Policy and Services is a Universidade Nova de Lisboa initiative, developed through the Faculdade de Ciências Médicas, in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of the World Health Organization. The degree is a 2-year course in two parts: the first one, with 60 credit points under the ECTS (European Credit Transferring System), will award a diploma from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa; the second one, with another 60 ECTS, will award the master's degree, after approval of a scientific dissertation. The qualification will strengthen the capacity of low- and middle-income countries to improve the mental health of their populations. Further information is available at <http://www.fcm.unl.pt/masterint>.

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EFPT conference

Sir: It was a privilege to assist in hosting the European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees (EFPT) conference this July, based in the historic setting of Clare College, Cambridge. The EFPT is an international psychiatry training organisation, composed of delegates from member countries' national training organisations. The UK hosted the conference this year, as the outgoing president of the organisation, Amit Malik, was a British delegate. Over 80 delegates attended, from 31 countries in an ever-broadening Europe.

Before the conference, delegates were invited to attend a local academic day, hosted by the University Department of Psychiatry. This included a tour of the old asylum in Cambridge, and a visit to the Personality Disorder Service and the modern hospital, as well as the new University Department of Psychiatry.

The conference programme began on 8 July, with talks about the EFPT's history and links with other psychiatric organisations. Country reports outlining the processes of training in member countries dominated the afternoon session, providing an overview of psychiatry training across Europe.

The academic session was held on the morning of 9 July. Distinguished speakers, largely from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, were invited to talk about their areas of expertise. Highlights included Professor Robin Murray, who talked about causes of psychosis; Professor Dinesh Bhugra, the College President, who challenged trainees to think about professionalism; and Dr Joan Marsh, who talked about how to get published.

Two further sessions were used for setting up working groups, where delegates from different nations brainstorm and come up with new insights into an area of common interest. These working groups do most of the work of the EFPT. Ideas are born and later bear fruit in the electronic contact between delegates following the meetings. They concentrate on a large range of topical issues, including research, establishing new trainee organisations, psychotherapy, and

child and adolescent psychiatry. Working groups were partly chaired by expert members of the College.

The General Assembly was held on 11 July, with minutes approved from last year's session in Gothenburg, and a taster of what is to come in Croatia in 2010. Board reports were received from the European Board of Psychiatry (UEMS). This was followed by election of the board.

The conference was extremely well organised, thanks largely to the efforts of Amit Malik and Clare Oakley, current chair of the Royal College's Psychiatric Trainees Committee. We were grateful to receive support from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the University of Cambridge Department of Psychiatry. The chief executive of the local National Health Service trust as well as the deputy mayor attended the garden party. It was enlightening for members to compare training experiences and to work together to improve training standards. There was much to compare and contrast, for example access to psychotherapy, and training in child and adolescent psychiatry. Trainees were overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic about sharing experiences and forging international links. The future of European psychiatry appears to be in safe hands, judging by the quality and commitment of EFPT delegates.

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The mental health problems of Iraqi refugees

Sir: Despite the mass atrocities and organised violence experienced by millions of Iraqis since 2003, there is limited discussion and research on the impact of war on the mental health of displaced and exiled Iraqis, including those refugees living in neighbouring countries. This is surprising, since the effects of war