The Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition

The Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition is a series of events conducted by the Irish Division of The Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Public Education Committee. The initiative began as a local project, as part of the Changing Minds campaign. It is aimed at developing lifelong positive responses to mental health issues. The regional heats were a great success, with a very high standard of entry. A boisterous intervarsity atmosphere added greatly to the enjoyment of the occasion. University College Galway, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland and Queen’s University Belfast emerged victorious over University College Dublin, University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin, respectively. The final was arranged in Dublin at a time when students were not heavily burdened by exams. A wide array of guests was invited, including representatives of the use and professional groups across all disciplines with interests in Irish mental health. Queen’s University Belfast emerged victorious after a daring presentation. The overall standard was notable for its quality, passion and the amount of work put in by the teams. Spike Milligan’s death, shortly prior to the event, brought particular poignancy to the final night.

The feedback from the students indicated that they had learned a lot about mental health issues, and many indicated that their attitudes had been positively shaped by the experience. The competition may also help promote recruitment into the speciality. The competition is in its second year here, and we hope that the idea will be taken up throughout the British Isles, similar to the Observer Mace, perhaps eventually toward a four-nation final event.

Acknowledgements

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