Forthcoming international events

The Royal College of Psychiatrists and its Middle East Division are holding a regional conference in Lebanon, 23–25 November 2006. The theme of the conference is 'Sociocultural Aspects of Mental Health', covering various aspects of mental health ranging from psychopharmacology to social psychiatry. Emphasis will be placed on presentations from the Middle East, but invited speakers will also come from Europe and North America. The various countries of the region. For details of topics, registration, abstracts, etc. please visit the conference website at http://www.rcpsych.me/index.htm.

Bulletin of the Board of International Affairs of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

Vol. 3, No. 3, July 2006

Bulletin of the Board of International Affairs of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

ISSN 1749-3676 (print)
ISSN 1749-3684 (online)

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Published online by Cambridge University Press
https://doi.org/10.1192/S1749367600004896
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The Royal College of Psychiatrists is a registered charity (no. 228634).

Printed in the UK by Henry Ling Limited at the Dorset Press, Dorchester DT1 1HJ.

US mailing information

International Psychiatry is published quarterly by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Subscription price is $45. Second class postage paid at Rahway, NJ. Postmaster send address corrections to Subscriptions Department, Maney Publishing, Hudson Road, Avenel, New Jersey 07001.


Subscription rates for 2006 (four issues, post free) are £25.00 (US$45.00). Single issues are £8.00 (US$14.40), post free.

Email: maney@maneyusa.com.

Annual subscription rates for 2006 (four issues, post free) are £25.00 (US$45.00). Single issues are £8.00 (US$14.40), post free.

For the changes in visa regulations see http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/laws_policy/immigration_rules/explanatory_memorandum10.html

International recruitment: individual choice or ethical dilemma?

Sir: I am writing in response to the point of view put forward by Dr Amit Malik concerning international recruitment in the January 2006 issue of International Psychiatry (pp. 22–23). The article highlights a number of issues; however, I would like to put out the differences between those recruited as consultants and those who come as trainees.

In relation to consultants, national governments need to put in place a structure which respects and values health professionals. They do not need extravagant salaries and generous incentives, but rather adequate remuneration, job satisfaction, support networks and good opportunities for their families. All these have been looked into by the Department of Health in the UK. Can you blame any health professional for wanting to move for such reasons? I believe we must look into these issues, for happy health professionals are able to give a better service to the people they serve.

With regard to trainees, I believe a number come to the UK for the issues highlighted by Dr Malik. However, having attained the higher qualifications they do not return to their home countries for many of the reasons highlighted above. The UK has always welcomed people who have more to offer to its citizens and in return has provided them with adequate remuneration and support networks. However, we need to analyse what implications the recent changes in visa regulations (brought in without any consultation) will have for those trainees here and those who are planning to come.

Some of the issues which may have persuaded the Department of Health could be the unemployed local graduates and restructuring of the National Health Service (NHS). We already have the largest number of medical students in training and more countries are set to join the European Union (EU). We have had a major influx from Poland already. Romania and Bulgaria are set to join the EU on 1 January 2007. We have major restructuring of the NHS and expect a reduction in the number of consultants. This can already be seen in Scotland, where there is a freeze in the number of consultant posts.

With the current reforms in place, I do not believe the ethical dilemma will exist for much longer. The time to discuss this further, with respect to the UK, has passed. With respect, I think there is more to discuss in world forums – for example, war, poverty, hunger, water supply and fairer world trade.

Mukesh Kripalani

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