Smoking

Sir: As a medical student who has been researching global trends in smoking, it was enlightening for me to read Professor Ghodse’s editorial in the January 2007 issue of International Psychiatry’s correspondence in the July 2007 issue on smoking and mental health. I did not know that there was a relationship between smoking and people suffering from mental health problems and both pieces make excellent points.

In the UK and other higher-income countries, decreasing the number of patients with mental health problems who smoke is an admirable goal; however, it is unlikely this will be the priority around the world. The smoking epidemic will disproportionately affect low- and middle-income countries. For instance, mortality from tobacco-related causes is set to rise by 2020 to an estimated 10 million people (Murray & Lopez, 1996), of whom 7 million will be in low- and middle-income countries (Peto et al., 1994). In such countries, therefore, the issues will not pertain to mental health specifically but how to prevent a future public health catastrophe.

As mentioned in Dr Symonds’ correspondence, political action has to be taken to prevent this from occurring, but whether the Word Health Organization initiative, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), is up to the job is debatable. It remains to be seen whether the FCTC can overcome its lack of enforcement mechanisms, the sometimes contradictory priorities of ratifying states (Assunta & Chapman, 2006) and the sheer economic and political power of the tobacco multinationals.

Aooife R. Singh
Fourth Year Medical Student, University of Leicester;
Uncategorised BSc in International Health, University of Bristol, UK, email asz234@eie.ac.uk


Medical student bursaries

Sir: I believe that your medical undergraduate readers would be interested to know about medical student bursaries in psychiatry instituted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Traditionally, only 4% of those leaving medical school choose psychiatry as a career, while 10% would be needed to fulfill the UK’s requirements for consultant psychiatrists with indigenous medical workforce. The College is taking steps to attract high-calibre doctors to the specialty and to foster good attitudes towards psychiatry.

Last year, as part of this campaign, the College, prompted by the Psychiatric Trainees Committee and the Board of International Affairs, introduced bursaries for medical students to take up electives in psychiatry or to undertake research. The bursaries, open to undergraduate medical students enrolled on a full-time course of studies in medicine at a medical school in the UK or Ireland, are offered for three types of activities:

- to undertake an elective in psychiatry (five bursaries a year)
- to undertake a period of research on a psychiatry-related topic (three bursaries a year)
- to prepare a research presentation (three bursaries a year)

In 2007, five bursaries were awarded in category 1 (£1200 each) and three in category 2 (£1200 each).

Applications are now open for 2008 and should be submitted to the Dean by 29 February 2008. For further information please contact Miss Della Goka on dipga@rcpsych.ac.uk. It is hoped that medical students across the UK will avail themselves of these opportunities to further promote their career interests in psychiatry.

Dr Amit Malik1 and Kate Holliday2
Immediate past Chair, Psychiatric Trainees Committee
Workforce and Education Manager, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG, UK

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

Apologies and clarification

Sir: It was both heartbreaking and relieving to read Professor Farooq’s letter in the October 2007 issue regarding the recommencement of the publication of Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society since 2005. I extend my apologies to the editor for giving factually incorrect information and any inconvenience caused to readers. I would just like to point out that the statement in my original letter was actually referenced from an article published in May 2006 in the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association. The reference was also quoted at the end of the article. Nevertheless, I should have made more effort to corroborate the information.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the journal and wish that it continues to encourage young researchers in the field of psychiatry in Pakistan.

Dr Yasin Abbasi
Speciality Registrar in Substance Misuse Psychiatry, Fitzwilliam Centre, Sheffield Care NHS Trust, Sheffield S7 7JS, UK, email dysabbasi@yahoo.com