

Tsunami and an international perspective on psychiatry

Sir: I have just read the opening editorial in the April 2005 issue of *International Psychiatry* (no. 8) regarding the tsunami that struck at the end of last year, and wanted to relay my thanks for a well written piece. I was actually in Chennai, India, when the tsunami struck and so was able to get involved with some of the relief and rehabilitation work.

I am very interested in international psychiatry and consequently read *International Psychiatry* when I get the time. Research and capacity building in the field of global mental health is so undervalued it is good to see an organisation proactively addressing these deficits.

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The APA and the new Pan-American Division of the College

Sir: In the elegant, well upholstered and well named lounge/director's room of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Atlanta, the Pan-American International Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists – proudly representing the 37 countries of the Americas – held its inaugural meeting: a reception hosted by the Chair of the Division (Nigel Bark, and his wife, Helen) for members, fellows and guests attending the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), with a large delegation of College officers and staff, including Hamid Ghodse, who has led the drive to form International Divisions, Richard Williams representing the College President and many others.

This actually was the 27th year since the North American 'Society', 'Chapter' and later 'Group' started having receptions at the APA. For the last 4 years we have also held symposia with speakers from the other International Divisions. This year, paralleling the theme

of the APA meeting, the symposium was on 'A World View of Medical and Psychiatric Comorbidity', covering history (Nasser Loza, Egypt), mortality (Frank Njenga and Pius Kigamwa, Kenya), the somatic presentation of depression (Khalid Mufti, Pakistan), outcomes (Stephen Kisely, Canada) and substance misuse (Maria Medina-Mora, Mexico), with John Cox (past President of the College and Secretary of the World Psychiatric Association) summing up.

Nigel Bark

Chair of the Pan-American Division,
Royal College of Psychiatrists

International meeting in Coventry

Sir: The Midlands Psychiatric Research Group organised its annual international meeting in Coventry on 2–4 June 2005. This educational event was arranged in collaboration with the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) and the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR). The scientific programme included speakers from the USA, Greece, India and Pakistan, along with experts from the UK who presented an update in different fields of mental health.

The participation of Professor Hamid Ghodse and Dr Brian Martindale from the Board of International Affairs of the College reflected the keen interest of the College in establishing links with international psychiatry.

The meeting provided all the UK participants with an opportunity to have updates in a number of mental health areas with overseas colleagues and also generated a lot of interest in future collaborative work with different countries. It urged the College to continue taking the lead in promoting such links, such as the establishment of its International Divisions. In this way members of the College can contribute significantly to the promotion of mental health services around the globe.

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Correspondence is welcome on any of the articles or issues raised in *International Psychiatry*. Letters of no more than 500 words should be sent to the Editor, Hamid Ghodse, email: hghodse@sghms.ac.uk