Notice to contributors

International Psychiatry publishes original and scientific articles, case studies and points of view, dealing with the policy and promotion of mental health, the administration and management of mental health services, and training in psychiatry around the world. Correspondence as well as items for the notes and news column will also be considered for publication.

Manuscripts for publication must be submitted electronically to the Editor (hgyhodse@sghms.ac.uk), with a copy sent to the Secretariat (ip@rcpsych.ac.uk). The maximum length for papers is 1500 words; correspondence should not be longer than 500 words. The Harvard system of referencing should be used.

A declaration of interest must be given and should list fees and grants from, employment by, consultancy for, shared ownership in, or other close relationship with, any organisation whose interests, financial or otherwise, may be affected by the publication of your submission. This pertains to all the authors. Manuscripts accepted for publication are copy-edited to improve readability and to ensure conformity with house style. Contributions are accepted for publication on the condition that their substance has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

About our peer-review process

All articles submitted as ‘special papers’ will be peer-reviewed to ensure that the content, length and structure are appropriate for the journal. Although not all papers will be accepted for publication, our peer-review process is intended to assist our authors in producing articles for worldwide dissemination. Whenever possible, our expert panel of assessors will help authors to improve their papers to maximise their impact when published.

Mission of International Psychiatry

The journal is intended primarily as a platform for authors from low- and middle-income countries, sometimes working in partnership with colleagues in the West. Submissions from authors from International Divisions of the Royal College of Psychiatrists are particularly encouraged.

Psychotherapy for the person – the view from Asia

Sir:
The editorial by George Christodoulou et al (2008) on ‘Psychiatry for the person’ and the response by Jeremy Holmes (2008) have been read with avid interest on this side of the globe. Listening to previous presentations on this topic at Asian meetings of the World Psychiatry Association (WPA), we were often left with a sinking feeling that psychiatrists were working well but could be better. For the Institution Programme on Psychiatry for the Person (IIPP) to succeed, there should be more participation from developing countries. The marketplace of ideas should not be confined to academics in Europe and North America and ignoring the rich experience of clinicians in Chennai, Bangkok, Singapore or Batu Pahat.

Professor Holmes understands that the practice of psychological therapy is different in Asia – the philosophies of Confucius and Lao Tze have immense influence on East Asian psychological therapy. The challenge is how to translate an erudite document in the IIPP into clinical practice, not just for psychiatrists but also for other doctors and medical students. Psychiatry for the person should also be practised at the primary care level; in Singapore two family physicians have crafted an innovative narrative approach in psychological therapy for primary care doctors, focusing on the centrality of personhood (Cheong & Goh, 2008). Psychiatry for the person should not be a hollow catchword and future psychiatrists should not merely be pharmacotherapists, with psychological therapy out of reach to workers, social workers and psychologists.

Fortuitously, some of these issues will be discussed in a forthcoming meeting in Singapore on 23-24 February 2009. The Top Teachers of Psychiatry (TOP) Conference has the support of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (UK, Western Pacific Division), Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists and Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations. This is an open letter to welcome the WPA to TOP. Further information on this conference can be obtained from pcmkeh@nus.edu.sg.

Professor Kua Ee Heok
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Competency-based training schemes in psychiatry

Sir:

At its 2006 annual forum in Riga, the European Federation for Psychiatric Trainees (EFPF) issued its first statement on competency-based training and assessment in psychiatry. The EFPF, which represents national associations of psychiatric trainees from across Europe, is broadly in favour of competency-based training if it improves the standard of psychiatric education and is not overly bureaucratic.

Competency-based training schemes in psychiatry are currently being introduced in Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, and there are plans for similar changes to training in a number of other European countries. The EFPF believes there are significant opportunities for cross-European collaboration and mutual learning between the countries introducing these reforms. The EFPF also very warmly welcomes the decision of the Board of Psychiatry of the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes (UEMS) to set up a working group to look at common competencies in psychiatry requiring within the European Union (EU), based on the UEMS document ‘A profile of a psychiatrist’.

We, as European trainees, believe that well designed, properly funded and wisely implemented reforms that have the potential to improve training will also improve the mental health of Europe. The fact that many EU countries are taking a similar approach and improving training standards at the same time also provides a unique opportunity to agree some common standards, to share and develop common assessment tools, and to strengthen the specialty. The adoption of more similar approaches in training and assessment may also facilitate greater cross-EU collaboration and exchange, for example making it far easier for a trainee from one country to spend a period of training in another country if the competencies and means of assessing them are similar.

Ian Soosay
Chairperson, Working Group on Competency-Based Training, European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees, email ian soo say@rcpsych.ac.uk

Association of European Psychi atrists (AEP)

Sir:

Your readers may be interested to know that the Association of European Psychiatrists (AEP) held its 16th Annual Congress in Nice, France, 5–9 April 2008. There were almost 3000 delegates from 57 countries. The theme was ‘Pathways to Integrative Care.’

The AEP Young Psychiatrists Committee also organised a parallel series of high-quality lectures and informal sessions aimed specifically at trainees and young psychiatrists. Among these, Poul Munk-Jørgensen, editor of Acta Psychiatrica Scandatica, provided an informative lecture on getting research published. There were also informal discussions with Professor Wolfgang Fleischhacker on how to embark upon a career in research and Professor Norman Sartorius on mental health issues across Europe. The Committee awarded 15 scholarships to trainees and young psychiatrists from across Europe. These awards enabled enthusiastic trainees and young psychiatrists to attend the conference by providing financial assistance with travel and accommodation. Scholarship winners also received 1 year’s free AEP membership and admission to a course for continuing medical education at the Congress.

We look forward to the 17th AEP European Congress of Psychiatry, entitled ‘New Diagnostic Approaches in Psychiatry: Relevance for Research and Practice in Europe,’ which will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, 24–28 January 2009 (see http://www.kmens.com/aep2009).

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