
WPA SECTION ON Psychiatry in Developing Countries & South Asian Forum on Mental Health & Psychiatry

First International Conference 15-19th February, 2007, Lahore- Pakistan

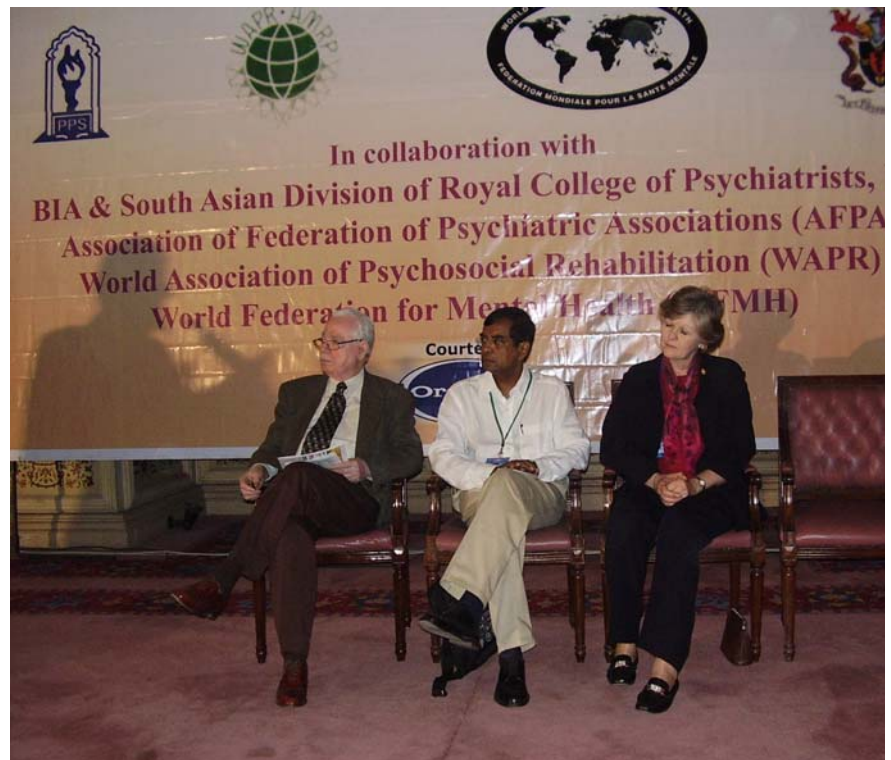
Post-Conference Report

WPA's section on Psychiatry in Developing Countries organised an international meeting at Lahore from 15-19th Feb 2007. This academic event took place in collaboration with a number of international organizations including South Asian Division of Royal College of Psychiatrists, UK, World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation, World Federation for Mental Health, South Asian Forum on Mental Health & Psychiatry and the newly formed Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations. All these organizations were represented by their respective presidents and the conference was also attended by the President American Psychiatric Association (APA), President ASEAN and SAARAC Association of Psychiatrists. The meeting attracted more than 450 delegates (200 from overseas and about 250 from Pakistan).

Royal College of Psychiatrists, UK, as an active collaborator for this meeting had a unique opportunity for having its President, Director Board of International Affairs and chairmen of South Asian Division, European Division, Eastern Mediterranean Division, Secretary Western Pacific Division and representative of African division at this meeting. This was the first time that BIA organized a joint session of its five Divisions in any international meeting outside UK. The interest and patronage of the President and Director BIA of the College was, of course, the moving force for making this possible.

The South Asian Division was actively involved in the scientific programme of this conference. Prof. S Haroon Ahmad, chairman of the Division, was in particular very kind in helping and assisting the organizers.

During this meeting, two special plenary sessions were organized on behalf of the College. In the first plenary sessions, Prof. Sheila Hollins and Prof. Hamid Ghodse described in details the vision of the College in international psychiatry and also mentioned about College's initiatives and priorities for improving networking & collaboration with other organizations and international membership of the College through its different international Divisions.



In the second plenary sessions Prof. M. P. Deva (Western Pacific Division), Prof. S. Haroon Ahmad (South Asian Division), Prof. Nasser Loza (Eastern Mediterranean Division), Prof. George Christodoulou (European Division) and Prof. Frank Njenga (African Division) gave details of the regional activities and contributions of College in this regard. The discussions following these plenary sessions generated a lot of interest and participants expressed their views and suggestions about future strategies and plans for these divisional activities.

The South Asian Division's session highlighted some of the prevailing issues in the region about teaching, training, post graduate education, service provisions and specialty services in different countries like Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The members of the Divisions also attended their local executive committee meeting after the session.

In addition to the scientific and academic activities, this meeting provided a chance to the College President and Director BIA to have meetings with a number of international participants and more importantly the presidents and representatives of international organizations and many national psychiatric associations from Asia.

Following were some of the distinguished delegates who met the President of the College.

- Prof. Juan Mezzich President WPA,
- Prof. Pedro Ruiz President American Psychiatric Association (APA)
- Prof. Michael Madionas President World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR)
- Prof. Shona Sturgeon President World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH)
- Prof. Pichet Udomratn ASEAN Psychiatric Federation
- Dr. Indala Reddy President Elect of SAARAC Federation
- Prof. N. Shinkufu President Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations (AFPA)
- Presidents of National Psychiatric Associations from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand & representatives of National Associations from Myanmar, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, Canada, USA, Greece, South Africa, Kenya & Iraq.

The President hosted a dinner reception to the College members and other distinguished overseas delegates who attended this conference. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan attended the dinner and welcomed the College officers to Pakistan. He especially thanked the College President for hosting this reception and giving him a chance to meet the renowned experts from all over the world.

The President and other College officers also visited following Psychiatry Departments in different cities of Pakistan.

Lahore

Fountain House, King Edward Medical University

Azad Kashmir

Abbass Hospital & Medical Institute

Abbotabd

Ayub Medical College

Peshawar

Medical University, Horizons, NGO working in the field of Mental Health

Rawalpindi

Rawalpindi Medical College

Islamabad

Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences.

Meetings were also held with a number of Pakistani officials from Ministry of Health & representatives from different Medical Universities to discuss about College's support, collaboration and assistance in different areas. A lot of interest was shown by the officials of Health Ministry in the Volunteers programme of the College and it was agreed that the College

will have close liaison with the Ministry of Health and the local psychiatric institutions to establish and initiate further plans in this regard.

The President's visit to earthquake affected areas was another important & a remarkable activity. During this hectic and very tiring visit, local psychiatrists, mental health workers and health officials gave briefings to the President about the post earthquake mental health work. One of the salient features of this visit was going to the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre in Muzafarabad that was established through generous contributions from College membership from Pakistan and UK. It was an important visit as it represented the College's international work and highlighted the College's contribution to the local mental health services at the time of disaster. I may add that the BIA and the College had set up a special committee for extending help to the victims of 2005 earthquake. The help and support of this committee was appreciated and the local psychiatrists thanked the President and the Director BIA in this regard.

The College President also had a chance to meet the following officials during her post conference visits to different parts of the country.

- Prime Minister & Health Minister of Govt. of Azad Kashmir
- Chief Secretary Govt of Frontier Province
- Director General Health, Govt of Pakistan
- Officials of Ministry of Health, Govt of Pakistan
- Health Minister Govt of Punjab
- Special Education and Social Welfare Minister, Govt of Punjab
- Vice Chancellors of University of Medical Health Sciences, Punjab and Vice Chancellor of Medical University, Peshawar
- The Executive Director of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS)
- British High Commissioner
- Representatives of DFID in Pakistan
- WHO Country representative for mental health
- Representatives of Various organizations working in Health & Social Welfare areas

Briefings were given to all these officials about the College activities and its remit with reference to the working of its International Divisions & proposed plans in international psychiatry.

The meeting with the Prime Minister of Govt of Azad Kashmir proved very beneficial. Despite his busy schedule, he was able to meet the College President and extended his full support to the local mental health professionals and promised to give due priority to the development of mental health services especially after the earthquake in Kashmir. This was indeed a very encouraging step for the local mental health services.

Similarly the meeting with the Director General Health, Govt of Pakistan and the Executive Director, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (the premier medical institute run by Federal Government) generated a lot of interest for future collaboration in training, teaching and manpower development. I am pleased to inform the BIA members that the Govt of Pakistan has asked Prof. Rizwan Taj (who is leading the committee on reviewing the national mental health plan) to incorporate the recommendations suggested by the College President while meeting with the Director General Health.

The dinner meeting at the residence of British High Commissioner was another important activity that generated a lot of interest among DFID, WHO and some of the leading groups working in mental health in Pakistan about their consultation with the College for some of their future projects.

Future Plans

The current visit of the College President and Director Board of International Affairs of the College to Pakistan and participation in the international psychiatric conference has played a significant role in the uplift of psychiatric services in Pakistan. The meetings with the government officials have provided a unique opportunity to the College for its work in

international psychiatry. Similarly this visit has given a lot of encouragement and support to the South Asian Division that will go a long way in achieving the objectives of BIA.

Following are some of the areas that will be explored in the near future to follow up the discussions and meetings held in Pakistan.

- College's Volunteers Programme
- Assistance to psychiatric institutions in training and postgraduate teaching
- Help and support in curriculum development, examinations and other related areas
- Exchange of experts and trainers to run educational workshops and meetings

It is hoped that the College and BIA will continue supporting such programmes in Pakistan and other developing countries. This will certainly be a step forward in establishing the College's emerging global role in the field of mental health.

Last but not the least, the organizers of Lahore meeting joins me in thanking Prof. Sheila Hollins, Prof. Hamid Ghodse & Prof. S. Haroon Ahmad for their support and patronage of this meeting. We are also grateful to College members and Fellows in Pakistan (especially Prof. Khalid Mufti, Prof. Rizwan Taj, Prof. Riaz Bhatti, Prof. Fareed Minhas, Prof. Abdul Malik & Dr. Aftab Asif) who helped us in arranging the meetings with various government and university officials.

*Report prepared
by Dr. Afzal Javed
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