

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHIATRY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP NEWSLETTER Issue No. 2 November 2000

Dear Member

Welcome to the second newsletter of SIG. Our numbers now exceed 300, which is very encouraging and a big expansion to have taken place over our first year.

This newsletter is designed to keep members in touch with what is happening but it is also an opportunity for members to express their own views. Please let us hear from YOU – by email, fax or 'snail' mail! Let us have your comments, views - or offers of help.

Please note that at the end of the newsletter there is notice of our next one-day programme, on 26th January 2001, with a reply slip, which needs to be returned if you are able to attend. Book early to ensure a place!

Warmest good wishes

Gillian Broster & Daphne Wallace (*editors*)

1. **Report of SIG open meeting 6/7/2000**

A successful open meeting was held at the College Annual Meeting at Edinburgh when **Dr. Peter Fenwick** spoke on ***"Intimations of Immortality – the nature of Near-death Visions."*** Much discussion was provoked and a number of College members expressed interest in joining the group. (Peter is currently overseas but will be reporting his findings in the next edition of the newsletter).

2. **Report of SIG one-day meeting 20/10/2000**

"AVENUES TO PEACE OF MIND"

There were 4 speakers and 43 members attending the meeting at the Royal College of Psychiatry.

The first speaker was **Dr Jeremy Holmes**, on ***'The Secular Use of Prayer'***. Jeremy gave us a personal and what he called a 'patchwork' presentation, central to which was his striking reading of William Wordsworth's famous ode,

'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'. He followed this with a brief but revealing commentary upon the poem, leading to his conclusion that poetry, psychotherapy and religion all help put people in touch physiologically, emotionally and cognitively with our origins – and hence with our spirituality. 'Heaven is where we come from, and where we are going to', Wordsworth seems to be saying in a work whose theme touches significantly on how it is possible to maintain a sense of continuity in the face of loss – a theme with which psychiatrists and psychotherapists can readily identify.

The second speaker was **Dr. Denis Scott**, on **'Healing the Wounds of a Nation'**. Denis spoke about weekend workshops he and his wife have been giving in Germany for a number of years. Referring to a 'National Shadow', he described the collective imprint of German history – especially that of the 20th century and National Socialism – on individuals today, a generation on. Witnessing certain events 20 years ago encouraged Denis to go 'beyond psychiatry' and to develop a therapeutic approach involving subtle energy fields (the 'aura'), helping people get in touch with the energy centres of the body (the 'chakras') and using the Tibetan method known as 'Tonglen' for healing. Giving two vivid case examples, he described how through first contacting his or her own heart chakra, the healer may then guide the client towards facing their own emotional pain and fear through a process of active imagination, the work being carried out in the context of a supportive group process. The book "Healing the Split" by psychiatrist John Nelson was recommended by several members present as a helpful text in systematically linking psychiatric disorders with energy fields and the chakras.

After lunch, **Dr Maya Spencer** spoke on **'Alchemical Hypnotherapy – Finding and Using the Higher Self'**. Maya started by giving us answers to the question, 'What is Hypnosis?' She took as her starting point the definition 'an altered state of consciousness which arises when a state of hypnosis, called trance, is induced by a hypnotist, a hypnotherapist or the individual through self - hypnosis'. Specifically, Alchemical Hypnotherapy (AH) is a method that can be used to access higher states of consciousness, rather than just resolve problems. AH synthesises techniques drawn from many transpersonal approaches within hypnotherapy and psychology including psychosynthesis, regression therapy, gestalt therapy, neuro-linguistic programming and shamanism, while based on Jung's psychological interpretation of the alchemical process (transformation of the base metals - *the emotions - into gold - actualisation of the wisdom of the higher self in daily life.*) Like CBT, progress depends on carrying out homework assignments, but is generated from the person's own inner knowledge of what has been revealed to him or her what needs to be done. Maya concluded with details of generic protocols used in AH for sessions with a variety of psychological issues such as 'inner child rescue', psychosomatic problems and addictive behaviours.

The final speaker was **Dr. Pauline Stevenson** on '**Groups for Silence in and out of Psychiatry**'. Pauline shared with us the finding that the simple process of waiting on God in silence in a small group is a life giving experience, helping us to be open to God [named or unnamed] and open to each other. Subsequent work in Africa and the acceptance of the spiritual in that setting increased her belief in this approach. On returning from Africa and training in psychiatry, she came to realise that 'the ability to be in touch with one's own inner creative "space" is crucial to being human, no matter what one's spiritual outlook or beliefs may be.' She developed her ideas further when training as a Group Analyst, observing how free floating discussion could lead patients to get in touch with their deeper concerns similar to the deepening of the group through silence. Perhaps Jung's theory of synchronicity can be usefully applied to both situations. Pauline's work developed further when she moved to Australia and introduced Groups for Silence in her psychiatric practice in a day hospital. She had used quotes from Mary Webb's 'Precious Bane' in this context and read out some relevant passages from the book by way of conclusion.

The speakers' talks stimulated wide-ranging discussion, interspersed with pauses for contemplation and reflection.

3. CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

At the end of this first year of the SIG, it seems like a good moment to review what we have accomplished so far and what we might hope to achieve over the next twelve months.

Our one-day programmes have been well attended, with between 30 and 50 members present. To date we have had: '**What do we mean by Spirituality and its relation to psychiatry?**' (January), '**Fear and Faith – the quandary of the psyche under threat**' (April) and '**Avenues to Peace of Mind**' (October). Is there a discernable pattern to the programme? Probably not, since we have been taking up ideas that arise within the group and availing ourselves of speakers who have volunteered from within the group. This has led, I hope everyone will agree, to friendly, informal meetings in which many points of view are both expressed and listened to with respect and the implicit recognition that we all have a good deal to learn from each other.

We are grateful to **Dr. Peter Fenwick** for giving a fascinating talk on '**Intimations of Immortality –the nature of near-death visions**' at the Edinburgh Annual meeting (also memorable for me because the two of us weaved our way from Oxford to Edinburgh through spectacular cloud formations at ten thousand feet in Peter's tiny single engine plane, touching down just in time for Peter to stroll onto the platform as unflappable as ever).

Membership of the group has until now been restricted to members and associates of the College. I believe this has helped us find an ease of communication, for as psychiatrists we share the experience of working under the same kinds of pressures and facing the same clinical dilemmas. Should we keep the SIG this way, or has the time come to open the membership to mental health professionals more widely? Such a change entails gains and losses. What do you think? Please voice your thoughts on this, either at the meetings, through the newsletter or by emailing me (AndrewSPowell@compuserve.com).

One of the benefits of becoming a special interest group is to find us being linked with a number of initiatives taking place within the College. These have included 2001 – A Mind Odyssey (see Larry Culliford's report below) and inclusion in the development of a competency-based curriculum for specialist registrars (Chris Holman is our representative). We have likewise been invited to contribute formally to the 2001 College Annual meeting (Andrew Sims chairs our conference sub-committee). On the international front we have been contacted by WHO, who are currently developing a module on Spirituality, Religiousness and Personal Beliefs (SRPB) to add to the established WHOQUOL instrument.

Our thanks to Gillian Broster and Daphne Wallace for composing the Newsletter. It's easy to forget that the many tasks undertaken by everyone in the Steering Group are done in people's own time and freely given. Our thanks also to Sue Duncan in the College for her invaluable help with the administration of the SIG.

As to the coming year, I'm sure we will be having an outstanding programme on January 26th (Forgiveness and Reconciliation), which brings in outside speakers for the first time (see below for programme). Our meeting booked for May 4th will be examining 'positive and negative' aspects of spirituality and in the autumn we are planning a programme on 'spiritual emergencies'.

We firmly believe that including matters of spiritual concern in the clinical interview is as important as other areas of personal inquiry and we want to encourage psychiatrists to feel confident in helping patients to speak about such matters when they so desire, and without embarrassment. How best to promote this educational objective with the help of the College will be a major task for us over the next twelve months.

Lastly, our numbers are growing apace. So far, we have held our day programmes at the College, very conveniently and at no cost to us. But there is a limit of 50, due to the size of the Council room. Would you like us to find other, more spacious venues? If so, would you be willing to pay a charge for the benefit? Please let us have your views!

In the meantime, all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Andrew Powell (chair)

4. **'2001 – A MIND ODYSSEY' BRIEFING**
Royal College of Psychiatrists 24 October 2000
Report from Larry Culliford, SIG Representative

There were about twenty people representing various Divisions, Faculties and SIG's, at the 90 minute briefing, which was enthusiastically introduced by the President, John Cox. **2001: A Mind Odyssey** is a celebration of the arts, psychiatry and the mind, which aims to inspire those involved in mental health services – both professionals and service users – to explore creativity and the emotionally healthy aspects of people's lives, and thereby to facilitate people in expressing themselves. The idea is to help raise awareness of the therapeutic benefits of artistic expression.

2001: A Mind Odyssey will be launched at the Annual Meeting in London, July 9th to 13th 2001, and will finish at the Annual Meeting in Cardiff, 24th to 28th June 2002.

At the briefing, Deborah Hart, Head of External Relations, spoke briefly on, 'Where we are now', outlining a dozen events already planned for next year's Annual Meeting: Art therapy workshops, film study sessions and a world premiere, a reception at the National Portrait Gallery, an Indian dance troupe, a children's art exhibition, music concerts and theatrical events among them. Other exciting events are also planned throughout the year and for the sign-off in Cardiff in 2002.

Next, Alexi Wedderburn, Events Organiser, told us, 'What you can do', encouraging individual College members as well as SIG's, faculties etc. to organise events in our localities, with or by amateur and professional groups, taking advantage of our Regional Arts Boards/Councils, and local resources such as art galleries, art centres, libraries and our own Trusts and hospitals. There were plenty of suggestions and further advice from her, and then about fundraising, from the next speaker, Chris Beynon, all of which was repeated in the text of an extensive and helpful 'briefing pack' handed out – extra copies available from Deborah or Alexi.

David Hart, currently poet in residence at South Birmingham Mental Health Care Trust. gave a presentation on his work in the 'older adults' department. Dr. Akmal Makhdum from the College's Eastern Division and the Psycho-pharmacology SIG then spoke about enterprising local, divisional and national initiatives, mainly coupled also with the College's 'Changing Minds' campaign against stigma, already running or planned, for example involving 30 local schools and even some local restaurants.

There was discussion and finally, we were told, the rest is up to us but also that the College would answer every question and provide all the support needed. Once Alexi has approved your idea, you will be able to use the **2001: A Mind Odyssey** logo. Even if you only have a vague idea about a possible project, who not contact her and discuss it?

I have already been able, on behalf of the Spirituality and Psychiatry SIG, with the support of the steering committee, to put the events organisers in touch with a musician and music therapist, Nikki Slade, and the group of mental health service users from Chiswick that Nikki works with, known as CARSOS (Creative Arts Resource for Sanity of the Soul). Funded by a Mind Millennium Award, they have produced an excellent popular music CD 'Breakthrough'* with spirited, poignant and some humorous songs arising out of first hand illness experience. The hope is that they will perform at least one concert, and Nikki is also available to give workshops on bringing out 'The Inner Voice'. A very special person, she reached her own breakthrough after a psychotic breakdown in 1989. Contact her through me (01273-749500 or LDCULLY@mistral.co.uk), or find out more by calling 07932 043277.

*Copies of the CD can be ordered through www.peoplesound.com (where you can listen to 2 tracks) or for £11.99 plus £1.00 p&p – **in advance** – from me at CMHC, 79 Buckingham Rd, Brighton BN1 3RJ.

5. INTRODUCING THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL NETWORK

This organisation may be of considerable interest to members of the Spirituality SIG.

The Scientific and Medical Network was founded as an educational charity in 1973, and now has approaching 3,000 members worldwide. Full members have a university degree or equivalent, and include all professions, not just doctors and scientists. As our leaflet puts it, our members are people who "question the assumptions of much contemporary ... thinking, so often limited by exclusively materialistic reasoning". They are "prepared to asking searching questions about the nature of existence and the nature of the human being." It aims to "deepen understanding in science, medicine and education by fostering both rational analysis and intuitive insights."

Members receive an excellent journal three times a year, containing original articles, reviews, correspondence and news. The Network's programme includes major residential conferences (such as the three 'Beyond the Brain' conferences in Cambridge), The May Dialogue on a topical theme, lectures and specialist seminars, and local group, Continental and (recently) Caribbean meetings, including an Annual Gathering just for members. The confidential Directory, in addition to members' details, contains lists of professional grouping, geographical location, interests and publications.

All activities are undertaken within our guidelines of open-mindedness, rigor, and care for others. The Network is committed to no dogma or creed, and "seeks to pursue truth wherever it leads." It provides both a 'safe house' for professionals to share in private unorthodox or groundbreaking ideas and research, and also a public platform where new data and methods can become known and examined more widely.

For me the attraction of the Network lies not just in its exciting programme and activities, but equally in the opportunity for meeting a wide spectrum of stimulating and caring people, all the way from researchers into the paranormal, via fellow psychiatrists who take the 'psyche' in our title seriously, to spiritual healers, and lots besides. It's refreshing to know that within 30 seconds of meeting someone new you can be talking about things that really matter to you both – no need for social chitchat! (Though the party at the Annual Gathering is always a memorable occasion ...)

If you're interested, contact Graham Gordon at Lake House, Vann Lake Road, Ockley, Nr Dorking, Surrey RH5 5NS, tel 01306 710072, or look at our web site at www.scimednet.org – you can join directly from the site.

Julian Candy
Vice-Chair, Council, Scientific and Medical Network

6. Attention Members!

Do you have difficulty claiming expenses for SIG meetings? In 1992 the then College Treasurer, Dr W D Boyd, wrote in the Bulletin (November issue) drawing attention to a DOH circular issued in November 1972 which the NHS Management had confirmed in 1992 still stood as departmental policy. Apart from the policy of your employer with regard to payment of expenses for CPD (which is mandatory in NHS contracts) you may otherwise have been put off volunteering for Committees, which organise College activities etc. The circular made it clear that regarding *'expenses of practitioners engaged on official college business it is reasonable to give assistance with time-off and expenses.'* In any debate with your employer on this issue it may be appropriate to quote from the College Charter (Para 3) which defines the objectives of the College as to *'advance the science and practice of psychiatry and related subjects; further public education therein'* and to *'promote study and research work in psychiatry.'*

If your problems persist it may be worth discussing it with the College.

Snippet from Larry! "Some SIG members at the last meeting were wondering why the College was not flying a flag from its pole over the doorway. There was a flag flying the day before so I enquired about it. That flag – with a motif drawn from the College crest – is flown on days when Council are meeting. The other flag flown is a Union Jack – on the Queen's birthday, etc."

7. THE SEA OF FAITH NETWORK

Dr John Edmondson has sent in information about this network, which may be of interest to SIG members.

I have been a member of the Sea of Faith network almost from the beginning. So far there have been 13 annual conferences. Parallel organisations are developing in other parts of the world.

The network began when a number of people asked Don Cupitt to expand further on his thoughts as contained in his television series, followed by a book, called "The Sea of Faith". Interest expanded and the developing organisation defined itself as dedicated to "exploring and promoting religious faith as a human creation". The term "Sea of Faith" is derived from Matthew Arnold's poem and was preferred to the other possible title, "radical theology" because of the ease with which this expression can be misunderstood. Membership is very widespread throughout religious organisations although it is a matter of concern that support from non-Christian religions is still poor. We hope this will change. Most members have rejected the supernaturalist understanding of religion although many have come from very religious backgrounds. There are some committed atheists. Some members join up with humanist organisations as well although the more traditional humanist groups look askance at the idea that their views too are seen as a human creation.

The membership includes quite a number of the clergy and church leaders, but many occupational backgrounds are represented. There are several psychiatrists as well as psychologists and psychotherapists. One member, a lecturer at a teacher training college, gave a talk on her doctoral thesis on the impact of religious belief on the child's capacity to cope with bereavement. This attracted, among others, no less than five Child Psychiatrists.

Philosophically the organisation generally represents the non-realist position of post-modernism. Don himself admits to being very influenced by the French language philosopher Jacques Derrida. But it is certainly not a requirement of membership to be committed to this point of view particularly as members who are not trained in philosophy sometimes take a little time grasping this idea. In fact the membership welcomes all those who discuss and share their views about values and spirituality with an open mind. The term network was chosen to express this idea of a widely based discussion group rather than anything resembling a traditional religious organisation or pressure group. On the other hand it would also be true to say that most people in the network see religion and the spiritual life as important one way or another.

The annual conference usually attracts about 250 and last three days. There are usually three main speakers but there is plenty of opportunity for smaller papers, workshops and so on. The conference breaks up into smaller groups for these. An attempt is made to summarise the main points at the end. Each conference has a theme like, "What on Earth is Spirituality" or "Faith in the Future".

In addition to the conference there is a magazine, published bi-monthly and there is an attempt to create a network of local groups.

Anyone interested in joining can write to the Network Secretary, Ronald Pearse, 15 Burton Street, Loughborough LE11 2DT.

8. Forthcoming Events

Spring SIG Meeting. Note the date for your diary: Friday, May 4th Title and programme to be announced.

College Annual Meeting, London: 9th – 13th July 2001

Larry Culliford and Sarah Egger have been given two 90-minute workshop slots for the first day of the College's Annual Meeting (Monday 9th). They are entitled 'WISDOM AND SCIENCE, COMPASSION AND CARING: Spiritual and Material Values in Psychiatry' and 'MEDITATION TECHNIQUES: An Introduction for Psychiatrists', to be held morning and afternoon respectively. For the lecture programme, the SIG contribution will include at least two distinguished guest speakers giving on the subject of research on religion, spirituality and psychiatric outcome.

Other meetings of interest:

'ILLUSION OF KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF: a psychodynamic perspective'
February 26th 2001, an afternoon seminar, Britannia Street Conference Centre.

'Michael Jacob's new book takes Winnicott's idea of a life-long series of illusions and disillusionment in making sense of the meeting of external and internal worlds, and proposes five modes of knowing and believing which are frequently used to fill the space between inner and outer reality. The scheme setting out the five modes can be applied to psychoanalytic thought, religious belief and many other forms of discourse. In this workshop the author will explain the difference between Freud and Winnicott in their views of illusion, and discuss types of worldview. He will then draw upon different sources outside psychotherapy and counselling as well as music, to illustrate the different modes of intuitive pre-thinking and belief, authority thinking and belief, and un-knowing – the last being the point at which both Freud's and Winnicott's views on illusion can be integrated with Bion's concept of O as well as, controversially, with Eastern and Western mysticism.' Contact Mole Conferences – Tel. 01273 242634.

Address for enquiries, correspondence or articles for the Newsletter:

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Attention please! Some members overlooked the need to book in for the last programme and were then disappointed, so be sure to check the next page for details of the January meeting

PROGRAMME FOR FRIDAY JANUARY 26, 2001

'FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION'

Venue: Royal College of Psychiatrists

- 10.15 Coffee
- 10.45 Preliminary notices Dr. Powell (Chair)
- 11.00 Dr. J. Dominian
- 11.40 Dr. Fraser Watts
- 12.20 Professor F. Oyebode
- 1.00 Lunch
- 2.00 Plenary discussion with speakers participating
- 3.15 Tea
- 3.30 Plenary discussion with speakers participating
- 5.00 End of Meeting

5 CPD CREDITS HAVE BEEN AWARDED FOR THIS PROGRAMME

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Reply Slip to be returned to Sue Duncan at the College

I wish to attend the next meeting of the Spirituality SIG 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation' on 26.01.2001

I do/do not want lunch (please delete)

If lunch required, please indicate whether Vegetarian / Non-vegetarian

Lunch by pre-booking only, enclose cheque made out to Shaw Catering (£4.00)

Name: (Capitals please).....

Preferred contact 'phone number:.....

Due to limitations on space at the College, please reply as soon as possible since applications have to be dealt with on a first come first served basis.