

Royal College of Psychiatrists
Philosophy Special Interest Group (PSIG)
Annual Report to Council: 2002-2003

The PSIG has had another productive year. The major event was a joint meeting of the PSIG with the Faculty of Psychiatry for Old Age, held in Newcastle upon Tyne between 31st October and 1st November 2002, entitled “Dementia: Mind, Meaning and the Person”. Over 200 delegates attended and the feedback was extremely good. It was a unique, interdisciplinary event, bringing together academics and practitioners from numerous fields, with speakers and delegates attending not only from the UK and Eire, but also from USA, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. A number of leading philosophers presented papers, along with psychiatrists, ethicists, theologians, psychologists and others, and the general feeling amongst the practitioners was that the problems raised were pertinent to clinical practice and stimulating. We hope that we can build on this success.

At the Annual Conference in Edinburgh, on behalf of the PSIG and the Ethics Committee, Dr Gwen Adshead chaired a discussion on values in psychiatry, with the President (Dr Mike Shooter) and Professor Robert Downie from Glasgow University discussing the merits and demerits of ethical codes and standards for the College. At the biannual congress of the International Psychogeriatric Association in Chicago, representing the PSIG north and south of the Scottish border, Dr Julian Hughes and Dr David Findlay were involved in organizing and speaking (with American law and psychology colleagues) at a symposium on the issue of capacity. In September 2003, the rejuvenated Scottish section of the PSIG, led by Dr Findlay and Professor Eric Matthews (University of Aberdeen), held a meeting in Montrose. Also in September, Dr Pat Bracken and three members of the PSIG Committee (Professor Bill Fulford, Dr Julian Hughes and Professor Eric Matthews) spoke on Philosophy and Ethics in Psychiatry at the Northern and Yorkshire Division’s Annual Meeting in York.

Building on the significant contribution made by the PSIG to the MRCPsych curriculum, members of the committee continue to have an input into the development of core philosophical or conceptual competencies that a psychiatrist might reasonably be expected to have acquired during training. On a broader platform, Professor Fulford continues in his work with NIMHE to develop a values framework for psychiatry.

The PSIG maintains its links with the international network of groups interested in the Philosophy of Psychiatry. Professor Fulford is one of the editors of a new Oxford University Press series, entitled *International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry*, and has contributed to the first edited volume called *Nature and Narrative*. Other members of the PSIG have also contributed, or will be contributing, to this important series. Similarly, we continue to play a leading role in the international journal *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*. PSIG has been represented at an international conference in Brazil in 2003 and hopes to provide input to a Philosophy of Psychiatry conference in Heidelberg in September 2004. Other plans include contributions to next year's annual College conference in Harrogate and we intend to hold the PSIG's first conference in Ireland within the next 18 months, probably in Cork.

With the increasing awareness of the importance of clear conceptual thought in the practice of psychiatry, the PSIG is striving through its committee to broaden knowledge and understanding of Philosophy within the College.