NEXT SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHIATRY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP MEETING

Friday 14th November 2014
Venue: Royal College of Psychiatrists
21 Prescot Street, London E1 8BB

Open to Members and Associates of the Royal College of Psychiatrists
and their invited guests

Programme Organisers: Dr Chetna Kang and Dr Alison Gray

‘Spirituality and Psychiatrists’
Over recent years there has been a groundswell of interest in the spiritual dimension of mental healthcare, in view of which the spiritual values and beliefs held by psychiatrists are more relevant than ever. This programme aims to bring together colleagues from a variety of cultural and spiritual backgrounds to share their thoughts, feelings and insights into how spirituality enhances both their own clinical practice and benefits their personal quality of life.

10.00 am  Registration and Coffee
10.30 am  Welcome and Notices: Dr Paramabandhu Groves, Chair SPSiG
10.40 am  Introduction: Programme Chairs, Dr Chetna Kang & Dr Alison Gray
10.45 am  Personal Perspectives: Dr Alison Gray, Dr Rob Waller, Dr Russell Razzaque, Dr Andrew Powell
11.45 am  Small Groups: Spirituality as a tool for developing resilience in psychiatrists
12.45 pm  Feedback from groups
1.00 pm   Lunch
2.00 pm   Personal Perspectives: Dr Mark Ramage, Dr Andrew Clark, Dr Simon Dein, Dr Chetna Kang
3.00 pm   Small Groups: Spirituality as a tool for clinical effectiveness
4.00 pm   Tea
4.15 pm   Feedback from groups and plenary discussion
5.00 pm   Close of Meeting
Programme Notes:

Dr Alison J Gray

I am secretary of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Spirituality Special Interest Group and a Consultant in Liaison Psychiatry in Hereford. I’m an Associate Priest at Great Malvern Priory and secretary for the Whole Person Health Network, and trustee for various Christian Health charities. When not at work I can often be found walking on the Malvern Hills.

Abstract: Reflections on the road less travelled: as an ordained Anglican priest who is also a consultant psychiatrist, I am one of a very small select group. Misunderstandings abound on both sides. I see myself as an interpreter helping the church to understand mental illness, and psychiatry to understand Faith. I will reflect on my journey so far, and on the particular spiritual practices and riches within the Anglican Christian tradition that inform and sustain my medical activity, giving me guidance and strength.

Dr Rob Waller

I’m a Consultant General Adult Psychiatrist working in Edinburgh and a member of the Executive Committee of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group. I’m also a director of Mind and Soul [www.mindandsoul.info], a website and network exploring the interface between Christianity and mental health.

Abstract: Coming from a Charismatic Christian perspective, I will describe how my faith guides both my own spiritual development and also how I approach my work. Christianity is about the 'good news' of a better life - with some of that happening in this life and some in the life beyond. Medically, this raises questions about suffering, illness and healing - especially when healing does not happen. The faith also promotes a clear bias towards the poor (in harmony with the aims of much healthcare), which needs to be held in tension with some who want to leave spirituality out of health-care. The beliefs of both doctors and patients are relevant here - with many patients holding to some degree of Christian faith. Christianity is likewise 'evangelical', so what does it mean to share your faith at work? And what happens when a patient wants to raise matters of faith with their psychiatrist?

Dr Russell Razzaque

I am a London-based psychiatrist working as a consultant in acute general adult psychiatry for the last 12 years. I’m also a published author in human psychology and write regularly on these issues for The Independent, The Guardian and Psychology Today. My special interest is in mindfulness and I have been practicing and researching it for a number of years. Recently, through my learning and experiences in mindfulness retreats, I have devised a theoretical model around the connection between mental illness and spiritual awakening and I have published a book on the subject entitled, Breaking Down is Waking Up; Can Psychological Suffering Be A Spiritual Gateway? (Watkins, May 2014).

Abstract: After attending mindfulness retreats over a number of years one begins to notice a series of parallels between the experiences of patients suffering acute mental illness and the practices engaged in on retreats. My talk will explore these parallels, as well as how some of the phenomena experienced during meditation itself have the potential to evoke a whole new understanding mental illness, consciousness and, indeed, reality itself.
Dr Andrew Powell

I was consultant psychotherapist and senior lecturer in psychiatry at St. George's Hospital, London before moving to Oxford where I worked in the NHS until 2000. For some time I had pondered the need for a Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group and in 1999 with the help of colleagues put it to the College, which responded very positively. I served as Founding Chair and have continued on the Executive to date. With Chris Cook and Andrew Sims I’m a co-editor of *Spirituality and Psychiatry*, published by the College – further evidence of the College’s support for the work of our Group.

**Abstract:** I have had an enduring interest in the relationship of spirituality to psychiatry throughout my clinical practice, first in individual and group analytic therapies, then psychodrama, spiritual healing and, in later years, soul-centred psychotherapy. I shall be talking about how we may connect with ‘soul’ - one's own and others, in order to access the innate wisdom that is universally present, if only we are open to seeking it and listening to what the soul has to say.

Dr Mark Ramage

I have been practicing Buddhism within the Triratna Buddhist tradition since 1996. Out of my practice of Buddhism, I felt a strong pull to work in a livelihood involving trying to help others and went to medical school as a mature graduate at 27. I found psychiatry to be the most interesting speciality with its holistic focus on trying to help those suffering with physical, psychological, existential and spiritual difficulties. I’m currently a Year 3 Core Trainee on an inpatient unit at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. As a flexible trainee, I can dedicate time to practice and participate in my local Buddhist Centre including meditation classes and Buddhism courses. I will complete my Psychiatric Core Training at the end of March 2014 after which I’ll be attending a 4 - month retreat in the mountains of Spain where I will be ordained into the Triratna Buddhist Order.

**Abstract:** Practising Buddhism greatly benefits my own wellbeing as well as my work as a psychiatrist by giving an overarching vision of striving to develop compassion and wisdom to their utmost for the benefit of all beings, including myself. Keeping in connection with this vision brings great meaning to my life and brings an inspiring and containing context to working in psychiatry. Within the context of this rousing ideal, the coal face of my Buddhist life consists of trying to purify my morality through practicing ethical training principles covering acts of body, speech and mind, constantly striving to develop mindfulness and universal loving kindness through meditation and the application of these qualities throughout all areas of my life, as well as attempting to gain insight into how life really is and acting in harmony and beneficially with all beings. Through these practices, and also through other practices including reflection, study, friendships, and deepening my practice of all of these through times on retreat, I hope to be able to live in a more wisely loving way in my life and in my work.

Dr Andrew Clark

I have worked as a Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy in Bristol for 18 years. I have a particular interest in training psychiatrists, in group analysis and in the application of insights from the mystic traditions (Christian and others) to the practice of psychotherapy. My wife is a vicar within the Church of England and I have a long-standing love of sacred choral music

**Abstract:** In this talk I will trace my journey from an early introduction to Christianity through singing as a young chorister in St Mary's Church, Warwick. I will touch on a spiritual awakening at University and an exploration of different faith traditions. I have over recent years returned to Christianity and its mystic stream. In my personal experience, times of spiritual awakening
have always been preceded by periods of deep suffering. I have now come to realize that this pattern of dying and rising is universal. It is the pattern that Jesus embodied in his life and death. It is also a pattern recognized in the mystic streams of all the faith traditions. A mental health breakdown can be thought of in terms of a psychological death process. I am interested in what the mystic traditions can tell us about how we arise from these experiences of dying. What aspect of our being needs to die and what aspect can rise again? I will develop the idea that our smaller separate self needs to gradually make way for our larger interconnected Self to be born again. Or as John’s gospel puts it, ‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’.

Dr Simon Dein

I am an honorary Professor at Durham University where I teach on an MSc on Spirituality, Theology and Health and I’m visiting Professor at University of Glyndwr. I write extensively on religion and health, religious experience and Jewish messianism. I’m an editor of the journal Mental Health Religion & Culture, Chair of the Science and Faith group of the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry and I serve on the Executive Committee of the World Psychiatric Association Transcultural Group and Religion group.

Abstract: In this brief talk I discuss my Jewish background and its impact upon my clinical work. I was born in 1959, just 14 years after the Second World War, when most of my family perished in Auschwitz. Throughout my life I have struggled with the issue of theodicy – why, if God is omnipotent and omniscient, is there suffering in the world? This has alerted me to issues of spiritual struggles among my patients. From a clinical point of view I often work with clients who are deeply religious and as part of the treatment examine religious frameworks for coping. My early experience of anti-Semitism has sensitized me to cultural issues in mental healthcare.

Dr Chetna Kang

I am a Consultant Psychiatrist and a Pastor in the Bhakti Yoga/Vaisnava tradition of Hinduism. I’m also a radio broadcaster and current co-chair of The National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum. I have spent more than 15 years studying, applying and presenting the Vedic Paradigm and its relationship with well-being to a wide audience ranging from healthcare professionals, bankers and academics right through to my temple congregation, using various media such as seminars, journals, books, radio and television.

Abstract: I will be speaking about how my spiritual practice has fed my experience of being more than body and mind, how this consciousness has helped me to transform the day-to-day challenges of psychiatry into opportunities and what impact this has had on my clinical practice.
Reply Slip for Registration:

Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group

I wish to attend the next meeting of the SPSIG on Friday 14th November 2014 on

‘Spirituality and Psychiatrists’

Venue: Royal College of Psychiatrists, 21 Prescot Street, London E1 8BB

(This meeting is open to members, associates, affiliates and trainees of the College and their invited guests)

Name: (Capitals)………………………………………………College No: ………………………

Contact phone number………………………………………………………………………………

Email……………………………………………………………………………………………………

I wish to bring with me, and pay for, the following guests: Name(s): (Capitals please)
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I enclose a cheque for the total registration fee of £ …………………payable to the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The registration fee of £70 per attendee includes lunch and refreshments. For College trainees and members and associates who are necessarily self-funded, the concessionary registration fee is £30. (Please note: cheques cannot be accepted from invited guests).

This reply slip to be returned to Sue Duncan, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 21 Prescot Street, London E1 8BB no later than Friday, 7th November 2014.

Please be aware that places are limited and will be offered on a first come first served basis. Registration will be confirmed on receipt of your cheque. Entry to the meeting cannot be permitted unless registration has been confirmed. With regret, registration fees cannot be refunded in the 4 week period immediately prior to the programme date.