



# BOARD OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PAN-AFRICAN DIVISION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The anticipation of, and preparation for the WPA/AAPAP conference occupied the attention of many members of the division for much of the early part of 2007.

The conference, quaintly tagged '*International Psychiatrists on African Safari*', eventually took place from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of March in Nairobi, Kenya.

The turnout of participants was very impressive. Among them were the President of the World Psychiatric Association, the President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the President of the American Psychiatric Association.

The scientific programme was very full with sessions and workshops taking place simultaneously. Many issues of great importance to the practice of mental health care in Africa were discussed.

One remarkable feature of the event was the large turnout of African psychiatrists from the continent and the diaspora. The need to create and maintain a continuous channel of communication between various groups who share common goals, especially pertaining to the improvement of resources and practice in mental health care in Africa was obvious from the interactions that went on in the session rooms and corridors, and continued into the interesting social events that were laid on by the organisers.

The Safari Park Hotel, with its undulating 'wild-life' landscape and 'colonial' architecture provided the perfect atmosphere for the rich interchange. Many participants took the opportunity of being in East Africa to go the whole hog by actually going on safari.

All in all it was a successful event and the organizers deserve commendation.

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### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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## BUSINESS MEETING

Business Meeting of the African International Division which took place on Friday, 23.03.2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, during the WPA/AAPAP conference.

Attendance:

**Dr. Femi Olugbile (chair)**  
**Dr Mesfin Araya**  
**Prof Sue Bailey**  
**Dr Michael Bourke**  
**Prof Sheila Hollins**  
**Mrs Vanessa Cameron**  
**Mrs Joanna Carroll**  
**Prof George Christodoulou**  
**Dr Daniel Wolde-Giorgis**

**Prof Oye Gureje**  
**Prof Hamid Ghodse**  
**Prof Tony Holland**  
**Prof David Ndeti**  
**Dr. Frank Njenga**  
**Prof Roger Makanjuola**  
**Dr Seggane Musisi**  
**Prof Peter Tyrer**

Apologies

**Prof Tuviah Zabow**  
**Prof Rachel Jenkins**

Dr Olugbile welcomed those present to the meeting and said that in Prof Zabow's absence he would chair the meeting.

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The proposed agenda was adopted subject to items added below.

**2. Newsletter feedback**

The African Division was the first of all College International Divisions to publish its own e-newsletter. The first issue was emailed in January 2007 to 34 out of 52 members. Although the newsletter was intended to be circulated electronically only, it was agreed that future issues should be also sent out in hard copy to those who do not have access to email.

Dr Olugbile encouraged members to submit brief items of interest for publication in the newsletter. The volume would be limited to four pages. The next issue would cover the current conference in Nairobi and would also include the details of the forthcoming conference of AAPAP in Nigeria next year. The President congratulated the African Division for this excellent initiative.

**3. Edinburgh session**

The session title submitted by the African Division – "Innovation in the management of mental illness: socio-cultural and economic realities in Africa" – has been accepted by the organising Committee. It will be held on Thursday, 21 June, 14.30-15.45. Speakers included Prof Ndeti (Kenya), Dr Olugbile (Nigeria) and Dr Kayue (Malawi). Members were asked to bring this event to the attention of their colleagues and encourage them to attend. The African Division would also be holding a business meeting in Edinburgh. The details would be announced in due course.

**4. Volunteer programme**

The members were informed that the College volunteer programme offered an opportunity to utilise the expertise of College members, both in the UK and beyond, willing to spend some of their time in low income countries. College members and their colleagues in low income countries who wished to host a volunteer should complete a questionnaire (available on the College website) which allowed them to specify the expertise they were looking for. The College would then search the volunteer database (which currently included over 80 names) to find a suitable match. The volunteer and the potential host centre would be able to liaise directly to discuss and finalise the details of the placement. The College did not normally accept placements shorter than 2 weeks and longer periods were encouraged. The meeting agreed that placements shorter than a month were not effective (excluding examining).

## **BUSINESS MEETING (continued)**

All College volunteers were offered extensive mentoring before, during and after the placement to ensure they were fully briefed on all the relevant aspects of the task they were undertaking, the country they were visiting and possible follow-up.

The College programme was open to both consultants and senior trainees. Members were informed that volunteer trainees were normally in their final or penultimate year of training and could offer a high level of expertise. It was also pointed out that the so-called 'south-south' exchange of expertise would often be more effective than UK based knowledge.

It was also reiterated that anyone placed through the College programme would not be expecting any substantial financial rewards. As College volunteers they were fully aware of limited resources of most host centres and were prepared to cover their expenses, sometimes with College support.

The College was currently working on developing an online bank of information of all voluntary work undertaken by College members, either directly through the College or working for other agencies. Once completed it was believed to become a useful resource for both volunteers and the hosts.

### **5. Associate members of the Division**

The members were informed that following a recent review College membership, i.e. the use of the MRCPsych designation, was only available by examination. However, the category of International Associate was open to any internationally qualified specialist of good standing with a minimum of 5 years practice in a consultant or equivalent post outside the UK and Ireland nominated by 2 members of the College. International Associates enjoyed most of the benefits of full membership with the exception of the usual voting rights. They were however entitled to vote for the officers of their international division.

### **6. Subscription fees for members and associates**

It had been brought to the College's attention that despite the banding of College subscriptions according to the World Bank classification the current subscription of £72 for International Associates in band D countries was still too high and often unattainable for those practising in countries where the GNI per capita was less than \$875 per annum. Out of 48 sub-Saharan countries 34 were classed as low-income. The matter was discussed by the Board of International Affairs at their last meeting and it was agreed to submit a recommendation to the Central Executive Committee of the College to significantly reduce band D subscriptions. It was pointed out that many College members in Africa were unable to afford their subscriptions and their membership lapsed. The President was pleased to announce an 'amnesty' on subscriptions which would enable members to resume their membership without having to pay backdated subscriptions. The members welcomed this.

### **7. Activities and projects**

The main activities of the African Division to date included the preparations for the Nairobi conference, the College annual meeting in Edinburgh and the publication of the newsletter as described above.

### **8. Any other business**

Dr Makanjoula, President of the West African College of Physicians, invited all members to the forthcoming annual meeting in Accra, Ghana, to be held in November 2007 and to the next year's meeting organised jointly with the Royal College of Physicians in the UK in Lagos, Nigeria. Dr Makanjoula was very much interested in collaborating with the College through the African Division and was hoping that a College session could be organised during the Lagos meeting.

Prof Hamid Ghodse, on behalf of the Board of International Affairs congratulated Dr Njenga and Dr Gureje on the excellent organisation of the meeting.

**BOOK REVIEW**

*There is a dearth of textbooks of Psychiatry written specifically for the African environment. The African International Division recognizes a need to encourage efforts in this direction. One recent news event was the launching of one such work published in Kenya by Prof David Ndetei and his colleagues. Prof Roger Makanjuola here reviews the book.*

**THE AFRICAN TEXTBOOK OF CLINICAL PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH – by DAVID NDETEI, CHRISTOPHER SZABO, TAREK OKASHA AND JOHN MBURU**

Some locally relevant textbooks on psychiatry have been developed for medical and nursing students in Africa, but none has been available at the specialist level. David Ndetei and his colleagues have now filled that important gap through their African Textbook of Clinical Psychiatry and Mental Health.

The eight sections of the book cover the various topics relevant to clinical psychiatry, ranging through the history of mental disorders, the behavioural sciences, clinical psychiatric syndromes, management, research and ethical issues.

The particular strengths of the book include the multidisciplinary approach. The chapters on stigma, the burden of disease and medical sociology are very good and contain valuable insights into cultural issues. The chapter on debriefing was very appropriate. Sections V (Non-Biological Treatments) and VI (Emerging Trends) leave one in no doubt about the essential nature of a good multidisciplinary mental health team to effective mental health care. There is a good account of rehabilitation in Section VI.

There are also some weaknesses. The substantial body of information from studies on clinical psychiatry in Africa is largely ignored. Substantial portions of the sections on adult general psychiatry and, to a lesser extent, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, are taken up with the DSM-IV system of diagnosis and categorisation of mental disorders. Although some aspects of cultural issues are dealt with well (mainly in Sections I, III and VI), the descriptions of the clinical syndromes and their management do not adequately deal with cultural issues; this applies also to the chapter on clinical psychology. The only African culture-bound syndrome mentioned is bouffee delirante. There are some inaccuracies, e.g. in the chapter on psychopathology, where a number of symptoms are wrongly defined. Some chapters lack depth.

On balance, this book will be a useful resource for professionals as well as students in the field of mental health in Africa. The authors should be congratulated on this pioneering effort.

**Roger O.A. Makanjuola**

COMING EVENTS

**AAPAP MEETING**

The Annual Conference of the Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professions (AAPAP) will take place in Ibadan, Nigeria, from **April 17 - 19, 2008**. The theme is **Mental health and social challenges**. The sub themes are:

- 1) Mental health and socio-political instability;
- 2) Mental health and poverty; and
- 3) Contemporary mental health challenges.

The conference brings together psychiatrists and mental health workers from across Africa and beyond. Invited distinguished speakers are expected. As in earlier conferences, this one will also address issues of particular relevance to Africa, especially those issues relevant to the social and political challenges with which the continent continually contends. For more information, please contact the chair of the organizing committee, Dr Victor Lasebikan at: [victorlash@yahoo.com](mailto:victorlash@yahoo.com).

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHIATRISTS IN NIGERIA**

The Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference of the Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria will take place from **15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> November, 2007**. The meeting, tagged Eko 2007, will take place at the Medical Research Centre of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital. The theme of the conference is **Mental Health Challenges of Rapid Urbanisation**. There will be invited keynote papers which will address matters relating to the theme, especially as they are experienced in the Nigerian environment.

Further information may be obtained from Dr Rotimi Coker, Chairman Organising Committee at [cokerrotimi@gmail.com](mailto:cokerrotimi@gmail.com)

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (IASSID)**

IASSID is the main international body that promotes research in the field of intellectual disabilities. Its main international meetings take place every four years with regional meetings in the intervening years. From **25<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008** IASSID will be holding its next international meeting in Cape Town, South Africa. This will be the first time such a meeting has been held on the continent of Africa. IASSID has a number of Special Interest Research Groups that lead on specific themes, one of which is on mental health, and those working in the field of mental health in Africa may be interested in attending and/or presenting at the meeting. Details can be found on the IASSID web-site (<http://www.iassid.org>).

**PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHIATRY, PSYCHOLOGY**

The 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology will be taking place from **26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2007** in Sun City, South Africa. The theme of the conference is *'Hypotheses, Neuroscience, and Real Persons.'* It is expected to be a meeting point between psychiatrists, philosophers and other health care practitioners whose work in some way or other impacts mental health. It is organized by the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry (INPP) and the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASSOP).

Further information may be obtained from <http://www.ppp2007.co.za>

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