

Dear Member,

Newsletter No. 14 contains the talks given by our speakers at the most recent SIG meeting on 30th January 2004, on 'Prayer in the service of Mental Health', and we are grateful for permission to reproduce the texts of the talks. The contributions are rich and varied, and cover a wide range of clinical application. All talks given can also be found under the author index in the SIG publications archive, which goes back to the start of the SIG in 1999. Looking through the list recently, I was struck by the depth and originality of many of the papers and we are fortunate to have such a resource now in the public domain. Our website has the greatest number of 'hits' among the Special Interest Groups in the College and there does seem to be a groundswell of interest in spirituality and mental health which looks here to stay.

The SIG is hosting a public day conference on 'Beyond Death – Does Consciousness Survive?' later this month at Kings College Hospital, London and more than half of the delegates (250 to date) are psychiatrists. Many in our profession are drawn to the profound questions of the meaning and purpose of life, and yet the pressure of clinical work is such that there is rarely time to sit back and reflect on what life means for each of us. Any real contemplation of life cannot take place without recollecting the inevitability of physical death. Suicide is now a social epidemic and our concern to save life should not be unthinking but based on our personal conviction of the value of life. How we can best explore this with the suicidal patient will be a topic to explore in the autumn meeting of the SIG, on 'Suicide' on October 22nd.

The SIG will be well represented at the 2004 College Annual Meeting in Harrogate. Professor Andrew Sims will be chairing the Maudsley lecture, to be given by David Hope, the Archbishop of York, on Wednesday July 7th, and on the morning of the same day, there will be two workshops conducted by Dr. Sarah Egger and Dr. Larry Culliford, on 'The Spirit of Caring – The Higher Values we share' and 'Keeping Body and Mind Together – Meditation made simple'. The conference is open to non-members of the College, and single day attendance is one option. Enquiries should be made to the Conference Office, 0207 235 2351 x 142, or emailed to conference@rcpsych.ac.uk

The SIG membership is now over 800, of which 750 are college members. We continue to grow in size, but we hope, not losing the informality, goodwill and spirit of enquiry that makes our meetings so informative and enjoyable. Do join us when you can, either at the College or at other venues when the occasion arises.

Lastly, please see below for details of the newly established SIG prize. Entries will need to be submitted by the 1st October next. We very much hope there will be a lively response, and are looking forward to some innovative thinking.

With best wishes,

Dr. Andrew Powell (editor)