



The Iraq Sub Committee of
the Royal College of Psychiatrists

A 7-year journey

February 2012

Introduction

The Iraq Subcommittee (ISC) of the Royal College of Psychiatrists was formed in 2005 with 5 members (Iraqi psychiatrists), 3 co-opted members and 1 trainee member. Membership is gained through application and interview. The ISC used to be part of the Board of International Affairs, now called the International Advisory Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The ISC meets 4 times a year. The members of the ISC come from the Iraqi Mental Health Forum-UK (IMHF-UK). The IMHF-UK was formed in 2003 by Iraqi mental health professionals in the UK, mainly psychiatrists. Currently it has 101 members (December 2011). The IMHF-UK holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM) annually. It elects a chair and an executive committee which meets 3-4 times a year. Its main aim is to support Mental Health Services in Iraq.

ISC-

- To inform and update the college on issues related to mental health in Iraq.
- To play an active role in identifying and advising the Board on current needs developments and plans implemented by mental health providers in Iraq.
- To liaise between mental health services in Iraq and the College.
- To provide advice and support to mental health professionals in the UK who are interested and/or involved in issues relating to mental health developments in Iraq.

Remit

Activities and Achievements

- A. Networking- building bridges**
- B. CPD programme**
- C. Training in Psychiatry**
- D. Service development**
- E. Research**
- F. Link with college**
- G. Undergraduate Medical Education**
- H. Others**

A. Networking- building bridges

Prior to 2003, Iraq was cut off from the outside world. Fourteen years of sanctions and previous regime policies made it almost impossible to keep contact between professionals both inside and outside Iraq. Keeping regular contact with colleagues inside Iraq has helped in building trust and overcoming the inside –outside anxiety. This was achieved through different channels including visits, e mails, telephone contact and The Iraqi Mental Health Network (IMHN). This is an e mail network which was started in April 2008 during one of the CME events in Erbil Iraq. Currently it has 152 members (December 2011) which includes almost all Iraqi psychiatrists inside Iraq and a number of psychiatrists from outside Iraq. By December 2011, the network had more than 4000 messages. In addition, liaison with the Ministries of Health and Higher Education in Kurdistan and Baghdad had helped in getting their support for the projects that were involved in.

Functions of the IMHN

- Networking
- A forum for discussion
- E learning
- Supervising research projects.
- Mentoring service development projects
- Planning CME events
- 1 e-learning course called: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy which has started and is still on ongoing

B. Continuous Professional Development Programme

"There was clearly a continuing sense of professional isolation from the rest of the world".

(Report to the college by the ISC following a facts finding mission to Iraq, 2007).

The ISC contributed actively to a significant number of CPD events. This was achieved through the organisation and delivery/contribution to CPD events inside (and outside) Iraq and through facilitating visits of Iraqi professionals to the UK and other countries to attend CPD events mainly the Royal College AGM. The following list includes CPD events that the ISC has contributed to:

1. CME event on mental health, Erbil, June 2007- contribution from 4 members of ISC, about 65 participants from all over Iraq.
2. Higher Education Conference, Erbil, December 2007- contribution from 1 member of IMHF.
3. CME event In Erbil, April 2008- the whole programme was organised and delivered by ISC, contribution from 6 ISC members including chair of BIA of the royal college, about 80 participants.
4. National MH conference, Baghdad, October 2008- contribution from 3 ISC members, about 80 participants.
5. Research Methodology workshop, Baghdad, 2008- organised and delivered by 1 ISC member.
6. Research Methodology workshop, Kut, Iraq, 2008- organised and delivered by 1 ISC members.
7. Child Mental Health Training, in Dohuk, November 2008- contribution from 1 ISC member.
8. CME event in Basrah, Iraq, March 2009-contribution from 3 ISC members, about 70 participants.
9. Training in psychosocial intervention, Istanbul, January 2009- contribution from 1 member, 12 participants.
10. CBT training in Lebanon, March 2009- delivered by 2 members of the ISC, 20 participants.
11. Rebuilding research in Iraq, June 2009- contribution from 1 member of ISC.

12. Royal College Middle Eastern Division Meeting, held in Baghdad, November 2009, active contribution from IMHF and ISC.

C. Training in Psychiatry

The ISC responded to requests from colleagues inside Iraq to contribute to a number of activities aimed at improving the quality of training in psychiatry. One of the significant achievements is the introduction of a new **Curriculum** for the Iraqi Board Training in Psychiatry, which became active in 2010. There were major changes to the new curriculum, see box below. The other major achievements include the introduction of mandatory training in CBT and involving nursing staff in the training process.

1. Competencies based curriculum: list of competencies similar to ones in the Royal College Curriculum.
2. Formal process of supervision (1 hour every 2 weeks).
3. Supervisors have to attend a mandatory training Course.
4. Different assessment philosophy (Exams, Supervision reports, and Annual review).
5. Written Exams are similar to the Royal College Exams.
6. Mandatory training in psychological treatments, mainly CBT.

Changes to the new Curriculum of Iraqi Board Training in Psychiatry

List of activities related to training:

1. Visit of 9 Academic Psychiatrists the UK 2005/6.
2. Participation in Medical School Exams in Erbil, June, 2007.
3. Clinical Attachment for one Iraqi Board student for 1 month after attending the Royal College AGM, July 2009.
4. Participation in the Iraqi Board Exam in psychiatry, November 2009.
5. A workshop of Curriculum, Baghdad, November 2009.
6. The Visit of the Dean of Royal College visit to Iraq, July 2009: commitment to link with Iraq.

7. Training the trainer course for 10 Iraqi trainers at the Royal College, and clinical attachment at different Trusts, February 2010, introduce them to the training system in the UK.
8. Contribution to a new Curriculum for the Iraq Board Training in Psychiatry, March 2010 active contribution from the ISC.
9. The first Clinical Supervisors Training Course, Sulaimania, Iraq, April 2010.
10. The second Clinical Supervisors Training course, Baghdad, November 2010.
11. Exams Workshop, Baghdad, November 2010.
12. CBT Training Programme.
13. De-escalation and Restraint Training, Sulaimania, Iraqi Kurdistan, 4-8 April 2011: Two trainers and one facilitator participated in this course .It was attended by 20 mental health professional (3 doctors and 17 nurses). The course covered the theoretical and practical skills necessary to prevent and manage moderate to high levels of aggression.

CBT program

- Established an email group (CBT-Iraq) for Iraqi Mental Health Professionals who were interested in learning CBT (50).
- Joining an online CBT course PRAXIS CBT, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust: www.praxiscbtonline.co.uk.
- Brief CBT courses,
 - ❑ 2-day course in Baghdad, November 2008
 - ❑ 4-day course in Beirut, March 2009
 - ❑ 3-day course, Baghdad, November 2010
 - ❑ 3-day training in April 2011
 - ❑ 3-day training September 2011
 - ❑ 5-day training November 2011
- The achievements of the project to date are:

CBT is now a mandatory part of the Iraqi Board training, a 20 board students completed one Short Case each and met the college satisfactory standards. The pilot psychotherapy service is up and running and has started to see patients. We are planning intensive Family therapy training course in 2012.

**D.
Service
Development**

1. O
ne

IMHF/ ISC member appointed Mental Health Advisor for the Iraqi Minister of Health 2004.

2. First Action planning Conference, Amman, 2005.

3. Second Action Planning Conference, Cairo, 2006.
4. Two months clinical attachment for 20 psychiatrists from Iraq in the UK, 2006.
5. Third Action Planning Conference, Baghdad, 2008- contribution from 3 members of the ISC for a 5-year national plan for Mental Health Services, Baghdad, October 2008.
6. Visit to psychiatric Units in Kurdistan, Iraq, June 2007.
7. Visit to psychiatric Units in Kurdistan, Iraq, April 2008.
8. Visit to Psychiatric Units in Baghdad, October 2008.
9. A formal review of 2 inpatient units in Kurdistan, Iraq, January 2009 with a report describing current practices and recommendations for developments. Also the first Quality and Standards event was held in Sulaimania in January 2009 with attendance from across Iraq.
10. Visit to the Trauma Centre in Basra, Iraq, March 2009.
11. A member of the IMHF is now the director of the Mental Health Programme of International Medical Corps (an NGO working in Iraq).
12. The opening of the first CBT department in Baghdad, Iraq, one ISC member works as an honorary consultant.
13. The Standards and Quality Project.

The Standards and Quality Project:

The aim of the project is to develop standards for clinical practice and the process of raising and maintaining those standards. Four priority areas were identified: ECT, Rapid Tranquilisation (including restraint, seclusion and management of violence), Medical Records and Patient's Rights. The project was facilitated by 4 ISC members and 2 US psychiatrists with around 15 Iraqi participants. A number of meetings were held as part of this project:

Sulaimania, January 2009
 Sulaimania, November 2009,
 Sulaimania, April 2010,
 Baghdad, November, 2010
 Sulaymaniyah August 2011

The achievements of Standards and Quality project:

The achievements of Standards and Quality project:

- The establishment of a Quality Committee for mental health in Iraq chaired by the deputy national advisor for mental health at the Ministry of Health with representation from all regions of Iraq
- 4 protocols have been developed in the 4 areas.
- Cessation of Unmodified ECT treatment at Al-Rashad long-stay Hospital and the transfer of patients requiring ECT to Ibn Rushd for modified ECT as required.
- Iraqi psychiatric nurses engaged for the first time in training on de-escalation and restraint.
- All staff in pilot psychiatric units for RT trained on CPR for the first time.
- Patients' rights placed on the agenda of a number of psychiatric units across the country.

Iraqi Ministry of Health responded to the Quality and Standards Project as follows:

1. Adoption of all policies as part of drive to provide high quality services in psychiatric hospitals and units all over Iraq.
2. Follow up the implementation of policies through the Technical Affairs Directorate – MOH by collaboration with (Mental Health Departments) in all governorates.
3. To organise training courses inside and outside Iraq for doctors and paramedical staff on implementing the policies.
4. Short biannual courses for continuous medical education, about policies for junior doctors as a part of their residency training.
5. Supplying all medicines, devices and equipments needed to apply policies and to issue a directive to forbid unmodified ECT except in centres where there are no anaesthesia facilities.
6. Reforming Patients' Rights Committee to include: Dr. Ali Meziad, MOH, Dr. Rawisht Sabri, MOH KRG, Dr. Sarmad Nazhat, MOH, Psych, Dalal Kadhim, MOH, Dr. Qassim Awadi, IPA, Lawyer, MOH

7. Collaboration with Heartland Alliance – NAMI program to provide psychological and social support to psychiatric patients through their families.

8. Collaboration with Iraqi Psychiatric Association (IPA) and Iraqi Medical Syndicate to apply policies in private sector.

9. Preparing to do the next workshop (5th) for auditing achievements on October 2012 in Baghdad on account of MOH.

E. RESEARCH

1. Research Methodology training, Amman, 2005, 15 participants, outcome 15 research projects, reviewed by IMHF members, 14 finished, a number of publications.
2. Training in Research methodologies, Kuwait 2006, 2 IMHF members, 14 participants.
3. Contribution to the Iraqi Mental Health Survey 2006/7.
4. Research Methodology workshop , Baghdad, 2008, organised and delivered by one ISC member.
5. Research Methodology workshop , Kut, 2008, organised and delivered by one ISC members.
6. Research methodology workshop in Basrah, Iraq, March 2009, about 70 participants.
7. The research conference for all medical specialities in Iraq, Baghdad, December 2009, contribution from 1 IMHF/ISC member.
8. Research Methodologies workshop November 2010.
9. Collaboration on a number of research projects between IMHF/ ISC members and colleagues in Iraq.
10. A 3 days Research methodologies workshop in Baghdad April 2011 for all medical specialities, about 40 participants.

F. Link between Iraq and Royal College(s)

1. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Kurdistan Regional Government, December 2007.
2. Annual session for Iraq at the Royal College AGM in 2006.
3. Award of President's Medals to the Iraqi Minister of Health at the Royal College AGM 2010.
4. Intercollegiate Iraqi Liaison Group (ICILG). The ISC contributed to the establishment of this group.
5. ISC member represent the Royal College in the International forum of the Academy of Royal Colleges.
6. MoUs between Academy of Royal Colleges and Ministry of Health Iraq.
7. Three of the Royal Colleges' exams are held in Iraq: MRCP, MRCS and MRCPCH.

G. Undergraduate Medical Education

The DEIPHE-Iraq (Development Partnerships in Higher Education-Iraq) started in 2009. It supports partnerships between higher education institutions in Iraq and UK and is funded by Department for International Development and managed by the British Council. Currently there are two projects:

1. Kufa Medical School with Leicester Medical School- facilitated by one ISC member.
2. Baghdad Medical School with Nottingham Medical School- facilitated by one ISC member.

The overall aim is to modernise and improve medical education and the objectives are:

- Curriculum Redesign.
- Initiating changes to the exam system.
- Providing an opportunity for Iraqi academics to visit British Universities to observe teaching practices.
- Developing policies for staff promotion and training.
- Increasing the representation of female academics.

There has been a number of meetings and workshop as part of the two projects. In Baghdad Medical School the curriculum is being reviewed while Kufa Medical School has started introducing the integrated curriculum.

I. Others

1. Iraqi Mental Health Act – advice given by ISC members.
2. Facilitating the publication of an Iraqi patient's painting in the cover of the British Journal of Psychiatry.

