

**ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS'  
PHILOSOPHY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP**

**Minutes of Committee Meeting  
Held in the Members' Room Royal College of Psychiatrists  
Friday 23 April 2004**

**1(a) Attendance:** Dr Matthew Broome (MB), Dr Man Chung (MC), Dr Subodh Dave (SD), Dr David Foreman (DF), Professor Bill Fulford (WF)(Secretary), Dr Andy Hamilton (AH), Dr Julian Hughes (JH)(Chair & Minutes), Dr Hugh Jones (HJ), Professor Eric Matthews (EM).

**1(b) Apologies:** Dr Gwen Adshead (GA), Dr Christine Brown (CB), Dr Stephen Louw (SL).

**2 Minutes:** The minutes from the Committee Meeting of 17 January 2003 and the Business Meeting of 3 July 2003 were reviewed and accepted. Matters arising were dealt with separately.

**3 Treasurer's Business:**

a) The resignation of Dr Alan Wear was noted. His hard work on behalf of the committee and group over the course of ten years were acknowledged. JH will write to express the committee's thanks to Alan.

**Action: JH**

b) WF outlined the background to the financing of the SIG. We understand that we currently receive £500 per year from the College. At present we have about £8,000. College rules preclude charging a small membership fee.

c) Three possible uses of funds were considered:

- i. Support to philosophy post graduates to attend conferences;
- ii. Support to local groups, such as the Philosophy of Psychiatry Group run mainly for SHOs by MB;
- iii. The possibility of a prize for the best abstract submitted by a trainee for an international or other SIG meeting, where the prize money would go towards the trainee's attendance at the meeting.

However, DF expressed the concern that funds could quickly be used up by such means. This would raise issues around the equitable distribution of funds.

d) HJ kindly agreed to take on the treasurer's role, initially for one year. HJ will take up the issues of funding and the use of funds with the College and will explore possible options.

**Action: HJ (JH to ask Dr Wear to forward papers to HJ)**

**4 Committee Membership:**

HJ, AH and SD were welcomed as new members of the committee. It was agreed that committee members should, if possible, take on specific tasks where this was appropriate.

## 5 Regional Groups:

(a) EM reported on the meeting of the Scottish Section in Montrose in September. There were reasons (e.g. a change of venue) for a rather limited attendance, but the day was felt to have been useful. Dr David Findlay has organised the next event for Wednesday 22 September in Perth with a title of 'Underlying Principles of Legislation'. This will again bring together a philosopher and psychiatrist to debate the issues. It was noted that there is a membership list for those in the Scottish Section, whereas a similar list is not available from the College for the rest of the country. It was also noted that the date of the next Scottish meeting is the day before the conference in Heidelberg and EM will discuss with David Findlay whether the date is negotiable.

**Action: EM**

(b) MB reported on the Maudsley/Institute of Psychiatry Group (mentioned above) which is in its third year and meets monthly. This is attended largely by trainees but also by others. The group meets to read, discuss issues and organise conferences.

(c) There was some discussion of the difficulty in sustaining some groups. It was suggested that the structural context, as well as the personal commitment of the organisers, are the keys to success. Linking such groups to MRCPsych training might be useful, although difficult on a national level. It was wondered whether links to Departments of Philosophy might be helpful. EM recalled a previous link with the Scots Philosophical Club. In the end this did not work for the sort of reasons already touched upon. The most positive suggestion was that Departments of Philosophy might be encouraged to incorporate one meeting dedicated to the Philosophy of Psychiatry in amongst their normal schedule of meetings. The Philosophy of Psychiatry meeting could then be advertised to local mental health services. It would be useful if members were able to consider encouraging this process by their local links.

**Action: All (especially AH and EM?)**

(d) Members of the SIG committee can continue to contribute to regional group meetings as recorded in our last report to council (2002/2003)

**Action: All**

**6 Activities Report:** There have been no further significant activities since the 2002/2003 Annual Report to Council, which is accessible on the SIG College website.

### A. Confirmed forthcoming conferences include:

- Heidelberg, the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology 23-26 September 2004 'Time, Memory and History'. There has been a good response so far in terms of submissions for this conference.

- Royal College Annual Conference in Harrogate 2004: JH is chairing a session on 'Capacity'. GA is also chairing sessions relating to ethics and there is a session, to which JH is contributing, on the mind-brain dichotomy in connection with affective disorders.
- MB reported on a conference to be held in All Souls' College, Oxford, on 28/29 May. Details will be posted on our website as soon as possible.

**Action: MB to forward details to JH**

**B. Probable forthcoming conferences include:**

- Joint meeting with the Spirituality SIG: WF has been in contact with Professor John Cox and a joint meeting is likely to be arranged in the near future.

**Action: WF**

- Meeting in University College Cork: JH is liaising with Dr Pat Bracken about a meeting in the spring of 2005 at the University of Cork. It is envisaged this will be a two-day meeting.

**Action: JH**

- Joint meeting with the Adolescent Forensic SIG: again this will be arranged within the next year or so by JH. This is likely to be a one-day meeting.

**Action: JH**

- Royal College Annual Meeting 2005 in Edinburgh: the SIG has been asked to contribute to this meeting. SD and WF will work up a proposal for this meeting (20-23 June 2005). Proposals have to be in with the organisers by Friday 30 July 2004. Any other member of the SIG who has an interest in organising a session or workshop should not hesitate to do so and communicate with WF and JH.

**Action: SD, WF and All**

**C. Possible forthcoming conferences include:**

- MB is secretary for both the section for Philosophy in the World Psychiatric Association and the Association of European Psychiatrists. It is hoped this will lead to joint meetings.

**Action: MB**

- DF suggested the possibility of a conference or session on the ethics of drug company funding.

**Action: DF**

DF reported that despite considerable effort, he had not been able to engage with the European Forum for Philosophy. It was difficult to identify areas of overlapping interest. The committee is grateful to DF for his efforts on our behalf.

## 7 Publications and Communications:

- There were a number of steps taken to investigate the possibility of using email to communicate rapidly with all members of the SIG. This is proving difficult because of concerns on the part of the College around confidentiality and because of the technical issues given the large size of the Philosophy SIG. The efforts of CB, MC and SL were acknowledged.
- Newsletter: it was decided that this should be regarded as a news-sheet in order to encourage quick and regular publication via the College of news to do with the SIG. The news-sheet, having been sent out by the College, will also be posted on the website. SD and WF will pursue this with the aim of producing a newsletter by October 2004. JH is willing to support this.

**Action: SD and WF**

- Website: JH has liaised with the College and the website has been updated in recent months. Members should continue to send JH any details that might usefully be posted on the website.

**Action: JH and All**

- Publications: MB has recently edited the International Review of Psychiatry. The content of this will be posted on the website. It was noted that there have been a number of publications relevant to Philosophy of Psychiatry and, indeed, the opportunity for publications in this field is now increasing. For instance Dr Salman Raschid has produced a book on R. D. Laing. MIT now produce a series on psychopathology. PPP continues from strength to strength. The Oxford University Press series, for which WF is an editor, has now produced two volumes. Cambridge University Press is also contemplating a series in a similar field.

**Action: MB to forward content of IRP to JH**

## 8 Education and Research:

- WF outlined some of the problems associated with the Research Assessment Exercise. Philosophy of Psychiatry is adversely affected by its inter-disciplinary nature.
- Education: there is now a huge resource of material to do with the Philosophy of Psychiatry. The challenge is to turn this into something useful for clinicians and others in the field. The MRCPsych curriculum supports Philosophy of Psychiatry. However, there is a problem concerning how to generate appropriate training and how then to examine in this subject. The inclination is to gear training material and testing towards an understanding of how the subject of psychiatry works at a conceptual level. This seems a better bet than trying to make people learn philosophy! DF suggested that we might reasonably devote some discussion in a conference to the issue of how philosophy should be taught within psychiatry. It was agreed to

devote 45 minutes of the Business Meeting at Harrogate to this very difficult issue. MB pointed out that members of the SIG should be able to influence the exam process.

**Action: All to consider issues ahead of next meeting**

**9 Any other business:**

JH circulated information concerning the Partners in Care road show briefing to be held on 7 May 2004. JH will reply to the campaign administrator.

**Action: JH to reply**

**10 Date and time of next meeting:**

Business Meeting, Annual Conference in Harrogate:  
13.00 – 14.00, Tuesday 6 July 2004, VIP rooms, Level 5.