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BOARD OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PAN-AFRICAN DIVISION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL DIVISION,
ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

Annual Meeting in Edinburgh 19 – 22 July 2007

The Annual meeting this year was an opportunity for three members of the executive committee to meet formally and informally to discuss areas of mutual concern and interest. The large distances make face to face meetings difficult but all the more valuable. A business meeting of the executive officers of the College with the international divisions provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and to realise that the issues were international. Amongst topics discussed were the shaping of mental health policy, volunteer placement exchanges and anti-stigma approaches. A further meeting of the division with the Board of International Affairs addressed regional developments and plans.

The annual session of the division took place on Thursday 21st July and was once again well attended by members but most importantly by expatriates and friends of Africa as well as a significant group of regulars who have specific interests in the development in the region. The theme of the session which was convened most efficiently by David Ndetei from Kenya and was decided on in view of the above was “Innovation in the Management of Mental Illness: Socio-Cultural and Economic Realities in Africa.” The aim was to address critically mental health care provided in 3 different regions with indication of the solutions applied. The three papers complemented each other discussing the social, cultural and economic factors. It was emphasised that Africa can and must be innovative in the mental health management of its communities. Professor David Ndetei addressed the mental health care programme in Kenya by discussing the Challenges and Opportunities in related categories of service provision, training, research and policy. This set the stage for the papers to follow.

Dr Femi Olugbile chose to address the provision of mental health care services in Nigeria in which he illustrated the extensive areas and population (120 million) to be provided for with mental health services, as well as the multiple cultural considerations in creation of a service. The identification of the needs and resources in the mainly primary care based service in many areas was apparent with the demonstration of the different provisions in urban centres as compared to rural areas.

The management of mental health in Malawi was presented by Dr Felix Kauye, the only psychiatrist in that country, with an excellent illustration of coordination of the teaching and services provided including the support for the other mental health professionals. The challenges were presented to include the future plans and the developments that have taken place recently. The volunteer placement experience was reported on. This innovation of the College and the placement in Malawi was presented in another venue by Dr Kauye. It was indeed once again a pleasure and

honour to chair the session presented by enthusiastic and knowledgeable colleagues, past-student and friends.

Of note, that despite the communication to arrange the session, none of the lecturers had had insight into each other's content. Appropriately, the talks all linked together to make a session which had to be cut short after running into the full teatime with lively discussion. Subsequent feed back indicated this could have warranted a double session. Informal discussions were ignited and continued long into the afternoon.

The dedicated session has been an annual event for the past 6 years since inauguration of the section (and the division) and has proven a valuable opportunity in my opinion to network and interact.

PROFESSOR TUVIAH ZABOW

Chairperson

July 2007

A FEW NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

It has been a time of almost frenetic activity in the circles of Psychiatry in Africa. First, there was the WPA Regional Meeting in Nairobi. Next there were the activities, formal and informal, of the African International Division in Edinburgh in July. And then there was the 10th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology which took place in Sun City, South Africa from 26th-30th August, 2007. The Nairobi and South African events were especially well attended by young psychiatrists from Africa, just coming into their own.

The message that resounded endlessly through the halls and corridors was the abiding need to create channels of communication for all psychiatrists, including Africans practising in the diaspora, and mental health workers from other parts of the world who are interested in the progress of mental health care in Africa.

The African International Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists is happy to be playing a pivotal role in the development of this networking. There is a lot of work to be done, but more and more we are discovering that there are a lot of eager and willing hands ready to do it.

Dr. Femi Olugbile

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN PSYCHIATRY

August 2007 saw the publication of the first edition of a journal for African Psychiatry, the **African Journal of Psychiatry**. This journal is an official publication of the African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professionals (AAPAP). This followed the March 2007 World Psychiatric Association regional conference, held in Nairobi Kenya. At that conference, a seminar related to publishing in Africa was held. The seminar was well attended and two of those present included Peter Tyrer (Editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatry*) and Hamid Ghodse (Editor of *International Psychiatry*). A presentation of the current situation with regard to medical publishing in Africa generally and in relation to Psychiatry specifically, saw Christopher Szabo (Editor of the then *South African Psychiatry Review*) critically assess the situation in terms of the status quo, the shortfalls as well as the possibilities. Following the presentation, Peter Tyrer was invited to take the floor and he shared his considerable knowledge and experience in the arena of publishing. There were many contributions from the floor, with some of the contributors including David Ndeti (Kenya), Robin Emsley (South Africa), Christer Allgulander (Sweden) and Anersha Pillay (South Africa). The general consensus was that Africa needed a journal that would address the needs of the continent. Christopher Szabo proposed that *South African Psychiatry Review*, with an established track record and an editorial board and content that already positioned the journal as African should be considered as a possible vehicle for such a publication whereby a name change and an agreement with the AAPAP could see this happen. The proposal was well received and the following day a meeting was convened. Those who attended were Christopher Szabo, Peter Tyrer, Frank Njenga (President of the AAPAP) and Solly Rataemane (South Africa). At the meeting a final decision was taken to proceed. Robin Emsley and Oye Gureje (Nigeria) were delegated to facilitate the process, representing the AAPAP in the drafting of an agreement with *Inhouse Publications*, the owner of *South African Psychiatry Review*. Peter Tyrer undertook to write a piece related to the imminent publication of this Journal, as yet unnamed, which was duly published in the May 2007 edition of the *British Journal of Psychiatry*. At the same time, Christopher Szabo wrote an editorial for what was to be the final issue, May 2007, of *South African Psychiatry Review* in which this development was announced.

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN PSYCHIATRY (Continued)

During this time the memorandum of understanding was drafted and this progressed to a memorandum of agreement between the parties i.e. the AAPAP and *Inhouse Publications*. All of this has culminated in the publication of the first edition of the **African Journal of Psychiatry** www.ajpsychiatry.co.za . The editorial of this edition (August 2007) details the content of the seminar presentation mentioned earlier.

The *Journal* will partner with *International Psychiatry* and an editorial related to partnerships in publishing will appear in the November 2007 edition of the **African Journal of Psychiatry**, detailing the specifics of the relationship and highlighting the benefits as well as sketching a background to the need for an African publication of this nature. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has been most supportive in furthering the process described and a special word of thanks is appropriate to both Peter Tyrer and Hamid Ghodse.

The *Journal* will strive to be an African voice for African Psychiatry. Further members will be added to the editorial board, broadening the range of African representation whilst maintaining the existing complement of board members, both African and international. The peer review system remains in place and every effort will be made to ensure that standards reflect the best of African endeavour. It is hoped and envisaged that the publication will serve as a powerful motivator for African psychiatrists, and those in allied professions, to consider publishing in an African publication. As importantly, the vision for the *Journal* is one of creating a repository of indigenous knowledge that will both inform and enrich the practice of psychiatry in Africa and potentially beyond.

Christopher P. Szabo
Editor-in-Chief
African Journal of Psychiatry
<http://www.ajpsychiatry.co.za>

THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN DIVISION

The African Division is growing steadily in strength, commitment and clarity. Following the recent meeting in Edinburgh, a number of applications for membership of the division are in the pipeline and it is hoped that as the visibility of the Division increases, more members will be recruited. At a recent meeting in Sun City, South Africa, the Executive Committee was unanimous in resolving that the young psychiatrists commonly referred to as the "Addis Ababa Group", be invited to join the Division. This is a group of young African Psychiatrists, who have been identified as future leaders and who have already received training on leadership during meetings of African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professions held in Addis Ababa and Nairobi, in the recent past.

It is anticipated that from this group drawn from across Africa will emerge a crop of well trained and committed Africans able and willing to lead mental health in the continent to new heights.

The training they have received, coupled with the anticipated international exposure they will get as members of the Division will give them the requisite skills to take over from the current crop of leaders in Psychiatry.

The future of the Division therefore will remain focused on the management of the transition which has always been a bone of contention in African democracies. The leaders in this Division are keen to set a good example not only in mental health but also to their fellow African colleagues in other institutions, including politics. We in mental health occupy, a unique societal position in which we have great societal influence because of our education and "strength to read the mind" as perceived by the lay public.

As we put in place our strategy for the next five years, the central issues in the program will therefore include (though not be limited to) the transition, training, building a strong and cohesive Division and exchange of our students and ideas, complemented by the Divisional presence in all major meetings of mental health experts in the continent. The Division will also promote the links with other divisions by participating in other meetings of divisions as well as continue to support the College in particular at the Annual Meetings, by ensuring a high level participation in social and scientific activities.

Dr. Frank Njenga

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHIATRISTS IN NIGERIA

The Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference of the Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria will take place from 15th – 17th November, 2007. The theme of the Conference, tagged 'Eko 2007' is '***Mental Health Challenges of Rapid Urbanisation***'. Psychiatrists and other workers in the field of Mental Health from within and outside Nigeria are invited to the conference.

For information, please contact: **Dr Rotimi Coker**, Chairman, LOC, APN-LASUTHEKO 2007; email address: cmdlasuth@apn-lasutheko.com cokerrotimi@hotmail.com

AAPAP MEETING

The next general meeting and scientific conference of African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professionals will take place in Accra, Ghana, from April 24th-26th, 2008.

The theme is '**Mental Health and Social Changes**'

WPA REGIONAL MEETING

A WPA Regional Meeting, to be hosted by AAPAP, is tentatively scheduled for September 24th-26th, 2009.

The venue is Abuja, Nigeria.

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