

NEXT SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHIATRY SIG MEETING

**Open to all Members and Associates
of the Royal College of Psychiatrists**

Friday April 16th 2010

**Venue: Society of Chemical Industry
15 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PS**

‘Spiritual and Religious Healing: Implications for Mental Healthcare’

Throughout history, humankind has invoked spiritual forces or energies in seeking to heal body and soul. Various defined and described in different faith traditions, spiritual healing has continued to attract strong interest in the face of the Western scientific culture of material realism. In this programme we examine spiritual healing, and religious healing in Christianity, Judaism and Islam, with particular focus upon the implications for mental healthcare. Among the issues to be explored are: what is meant by spiritual and religious healing, what can science tell us about the process, how may efficacy of such forms of healing be tested and how might these healing modalities be appropriately incorporated into mental healthcare?

- 10.00 Registration and Coffee
- 10.30 Notices: **Prof. Chris Cook** (Chair)
- 10.45 **Spiritual healing: What is it? Does it work and does it have a place in modern healthcare?**
Dr. Su Mason
- 11.30 **Healing and the wounded psyche**
Dr. Andrew Powell
- 12.15 **Kabbalistic healing**
Dr. Simon Dein
- 1.00 Lunch
- 2.00 **Healing in the Sufi tradition**
Dr. Athar Yawar
- 2.45 **Healing by paradox in the Christian tradition**
Canon Beaumont Stevenson
- 3.30 Tea Break
- 4.00 **Plenary with Speakers**
- 5.00 **Close of programme**

Programme Notes:

‘Spiritual healing: What is it? Does it work and does it have a place in modern healthcare?’

Dr. Su Mason

The practice of spiritual healing has a long tradition that is surrounded by much controversy and misunderstanding. Is it a charade, leading to the exploitation of vulnerable people, or could it be of real relevance in healthcare today? What evidence is needed, of what it is or how it may work, in order legitimately to include spiritual healing as a complementary therapy within the NHS?

An overview of spiritual healing will be presented. The act of healing itself will be described and possible theories on mechanisms of effect will be discussed, as well as the current research evidence of effectiveness. As with all spiritual practices that are difficult to convey in words, an appreciation of healing is best experienced. Therefore, an easy, self-healing visualization will be demonstrated by way of introduction.

About the speaker:

Su Mason has been a practicing spiritual healer for twelve years and is Chair of Leeds Healing Centre. She has a healthcare and research background: she was once Senior Nursing Sister of a regional paediatric burns unit and was qualified as a Health Visitor and District Nurse. She has a PhD in nursing, was Joint Head of the Clinical Trials Research Unit at the University of Leeds from 1998 to 2002 and lectured in medical research ethics. Su has over 40 peer-reviewed medical research papers published (14 in the Lancet or the BMJ) and is a reviewer for leading medical journals and research grant-giving bodies. She was principal investigator of MRC and EU research grants on the ethics of informed consent for neonatal research and a collaborator on many other research studies and is now Director of 'The Positive Care Programme', a charity providing an effective programme of complementary therapies and motivational workshops for people with long-term illness and carers.

‘Healing and the wounded psyche’

Dr. Andrew Powell

From the transpersonal perspective, human life invariably brings the soul face to face with suffering, not just the suffering of others but the lived experience of wounds to the egoic self. Yet every wound brings the possibility of healing and, importantly, healing which far from re-instating the demands and expectations of the ego, leads to a greater vision of what it means to become whole. Wholeness of being, and the joyfulness that naturally arises, means discovering how to flow with life and, at the right time, with death too. As doctors we cure when we can, but provided we remember, healing is on hand every time we meet with suffering.

About the speaker:

Dr. Andrew Powell trained in psychiatry and psychotherapy at the Maudsley Hospital, London. He was Consultant and Senior Lecturer at St. George's Hospital, London for eleven years before moving to Oxford, where he continued to work in the National Health Service until 2000. Andrew is an Associate of the College of Healing and Founding Chair of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, UK. His publications on spirituality and mental health are available from: www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/sig/spirit/publications/index.htm

'Kabbalah and healing'

Dr. Simon Dein

This talk will focus upon Kabbalah and Healing. I begin by discussing the Lurianic creation myth, according to which the universe was born in a state of disharmony with humans separated from the Godhead. It is only by the performance of *mitzvot* (good deeds) that the universe will be re-harmonised, the union between humankind and God re-established, and evil and disease will disappear. I will then move on to discuss how Kabbalistic ideas have influenced Freud, Klein and contemporary psychoanalysis. I end by discussing new Kabbalistic movements such as The Kabbalah Centre, which has attained recent notoriety on account of the fact that it has attracted many celebrities in search of spiritual healing.

About the speaker:

Dr. Simon Dein is a Senior Lecturer in anthropology and medicine at University College London Medical School and holds a PhD in social anthropology. He is Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow, Essex. A joint editor for the journal, *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, Dr. Dein has also published widely on religion and healing in Hasidism and the psychology of religion. He is the Secretary of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Chair of the Science, Faith and Cultural Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry.

'Healing in the Sufi tradition'

Dr. Athar Yawar

Psychiatry embodies scientific method. Sorrow, fear, or unusual beliefs and behaviour are considered as an illness that is localised within the patient's mind, which is considered to be material (or to behave as though it were). Hypothesis formulation, testing, and iteration are used in diagnosis and treatment. Yet has this scientific method been scientifically tested? Do the assumptions behind it survive rigorous testing? Can the scientific method explain the human situation? If not, do other coherent approaches exist?

Sufi mystics regard healing as essential to their work but their understanding of reality and their concepts of illness and healing, are different from -

although arguably complementary to - those explicitly upheld by psychiatry. I will be exploring how their philosophy and practice shapes the world around them, and how their work can help us articulate what so often escapes official audit - the value of the art of medicine.

About the speaker:

Dr. Athar Yawar studied physiology and clinical medicine at Oxford. While working at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, he took a Master's in Culture and Mental Health, which explored the limits of diagnostic descriptions of the consequences of torture. When subsequently training at the Maudsley Hospital, he helped to set up a psychiatric service at the Helen Bamber Foundation. He later became a Senior Editor at The Lancet, analysing and editing an eclectic range of papers, including all case reports. He is now undertaking a PhD in culture and the philosophy of psychiatry at the University of London, studying Sufi healing. He continues to work for the Helen Bamber Foundation and is a director of the Scientific and Medical Network, with a special interest in education.

'Healing by paradox in the Christian tradition' Canon Beaumont Stevenson

One of the ways which people avail themselves of healing is to turn to their religion. Christianity can be explored as embodying a particular dynamic of healing in which it is possible to look at the potential of that dynamic on transforming illness and trauma into wholeness. Identifying the dynamic can potentially make it more universally available to be incorporated into a broad range of other therapeutic approaches.

The healing paradox arises when the 'worst', which happens to us in trauma or illness is discovered to be the 'worst/best' in a very practical and realistic way, resulting in the release of a new potential or, we might say, by forming a pearl around painful grit, or by opening new doors that had previously never been opened. We may just discover that we are in fact better off because of what has happened, having been obliged to look at life in a new way. Can a therapist or psychiatrist assist this potential happening? The healing paradox will provide the basis for a discussion on the potentials of the 'fall upwards', which illness and trauma invariably provide as part of the human condition.

About the speaker:

Canon Beaumont Stevenson is an Anglican priest and a psychotherapist and Group Analyst. He is a member of the Institute of Group Analysis, UKCP and MBACP. He was for many years Senior Chaplain of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust. He is Pastoral Care Adviser to the Diocese of Oxford and teaches Pastoral Psychology at St Stephen's House, Oxford. As part of the Staff Support Service in the NHS, he became interested in the mental health of institutions and in particular, how the institution can re-discover its vision when it has become eroded through stresses of work and excessive attention to targets, which can so easily erode morale.

**Reply Slip to be returned to Sue Duncan, Royal College of Psychiatrists,
17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG**

I wish to attend the next meeting of the Spirituality SIG on April 16th 2010

on

**‘Spiritual and Religious Healing:
Implications for Mental Healthcare’**

at

**The Society of Chemical Industry
15 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PS
10.00 am – 5.00 pm**

The registration fee of £70 per person includes lunch and refreshments.

Name: (Capitals).....College No:

**Contact phone
number.....**

Please ring your lunch preference: Vegetarian / Non-vegetarian

I wish to bring one or more guests: Name(s): (Capitals please)

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Please ring your guest lunch preference(s): Vegetarian / Non-vegetarian

**I enclose a cheque for the registration fee of £payable
to the**

**Royal College of Psychiatrists, for myself / myself plus guest(s) (ring as
appropriate).**

***Please note: places are limited and will be offered on a first come first
served basis. Registration will be confirmed on receipt of your cheque.***

***Spirituality SIG meetings are open to members and associates of the
College, and their invited guests.***

The closing date for this meeting is April 9th 2010