

NEXT SIG MEMBERS' MEETING

Royal College of Psychiatrists Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group

Programme for Friday 31st March 2006

Venue: Royal College of Psychiatrists
17 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PG

'Psychosis, Psychedelics and the Transpersonal Journey'

- 10.15 Coffee
- 10.45 **Preliminary Notices: Dr Sarah Egger (Chair)**
- 11.00 **'Psychosis or Spiritual Emergence? Consideration of the
Transpersonal Perspective within Psychiatry'**
- Dr Nicki Crowley** Consultant Psychiatrist in General Adult
Psychiatry with the Clinical Lead for the Crisis Resolution Team
in Buckinghamshire.
- 12.15 Lunch
- 13.30 **'Non-ordinary States of Consciousness and the
Transpersonal Journey'**
- Dr Tim Read** Consultant Psychiatrist at the Royal London
Hospital to the Crisis Intervention Service (CIS) and the
Emergency Mental health Liaison Service.
- 14.45 Tea
- 15.15 **'From Sacred Plants to Psychotherapy: The History and Re-
emergence of Psychedelics in Medicine'**
- Dr Ben Sessa** Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist,
Orchard Lodge Young People's Unit, Taunton, Somerset
- 16.30 Plenary
- 17.00 Close

PLEASE NOTE – THIS PROGRAMME IS FOR SIG MEMBERS AND INVITED GUESTS

Programme Information:

Dr Nicki Crowley MB ChB MRCPsych

‘Psychosis or Spiritual Emergence? Consideration of the Transpersonal Perspective within Psychiatry’

As psychiatrists we work with people experiencing altered states of consciousness. Usually by the time they reach secondary care, these are malignant, regressive psychotic states potentially damaging to the individual and those around them. Often they are precipitated by illicit drug use.

Sometimes, challenging and unusual behaviour holds potential. Can psychological transformation follow a mental health crisis? Are mental health crises always about ‘breakdown’ or can there be potential for ‘breakthrough’?

About the Speaker:

Nicki currently works as a Consultant Psychiatrist in General Adult Psychiatry with the Clinical Lead for the Crisis Resolution Team in Buckinghamshire.

Prior to this she qualified from the University of Birmingham Medical School with an interest in neuropsychiatry and complementary and alternative medicine. Subsequently she specialised in psychiatry, training with both the Royal College of Psychiatry and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry, gaining a CCST with an endorsement in liaison psychiatry.

Nicki’s broader interest lies in understanding deeper models of the psyche, in particular working experientially with non-ordinary states of consciousness in a therapeutic context. This interest draws on both psychoanalytical and transpersonal perspectives. Together with previous training with Dr Roger Woolger and currently undertaking a personal Jungian analysis, she is now enrolled on the Grof Transpersonal Training Programme in Holotropic Breathwork.TM

This latter work is derived from modern consciousness research, depth psychology and shamanic and spiritual practices, to support natural healing and growth through the direct experience of non-ordinary states of consciousness.

Dr Tim Read BSc MBBS MRCPsych MInstGA

‘Non ordinary states of consciousness and the transpersonal journey’.

Quantum physics has shown how the physical world is much stranger and more complex than we had previously liked to imagine. The same is probably true for consciousness. I will briefly discuss some theories of consciousness and levels of consciousness and some of the techniques which give rise to non-ordinary states of consciousness (NOSC). The point of these NOSCs is to explore difficult to access areas of the individual and

collective psyche. These deeper layers seem to have a condensation of meaning, spiritual tone, powerful potential for transformation and hold the possibility of side effects (spiritual emergency). The use of NOSCs, grounded and integrated in a regular practice, facilitates the process of individuation (Jung), and a moving towards wholeness (Grof), as we go beyond the personal to an expanded sense of self on the long and winding road of the transpersonal journey.

About the speaker:

Tim's current post is Consultant Psychiatrist at the Royal London Hospital to the Crisis Intervention Service (CIS) and the Emergency Mental health Liaison Service. The CIS is a psychodynamically-orientated service for non-psychotic emergencies, and reflects Tim's interest in crisis and transformation and his favoured position at the interface of psychiatry and psychotherapy. He was a CMHT Consultant in East London for some years in conjunction with CIS and Liaison duties.

A neuroscience BSc and a developing interest in Jung drew Tim towards psychiatry as a student. After travelling for a year in Asia he trained at St Georges and UCH in London, developing a special interest in biological research and the psychodynamic ethos. Tim qualified as a Group Analyst in 1995, addressing the relationship between quantum physics, mathematics and psychotherapy in one of the qualifying papers. Over the last few years he has developed an interest in Jungian and transpersonal concepts by exploring non-ordinary states of consciousness. Tim is enrolled on the Grof Transpersonal training programme.

Dr Ben Sessa MBBS BSc MRCPsych

'From Sacred Plants to Psychotherapy: The History and Re-Emergence of Psychedelics in Medicine'

Intoxicating drugs have been used by humankind from all over the world for millennia. They form the basis of many religions throughout the developing world and have played a pivotal role in shaping modern thought for us in the West. For many users who take these drugs as part of a religious ceremony, the psychedelic experience is indistinguishable from the spiritual experience.

There was a brief episode of interest in these substances in psychiatry in the 1950s and 1960s, when their ability to loosen the ego and deepen the psychotherapeutic process was explored. But they have since become demonised by the 'war on drugs' and disappeared from view for the medical community.

However, there is a re-emergence of interest in these fascinating substances. If used in a controlled clinical environment they can offer the psychiatrist and the neuroscientist valuable tools to facilitate psychotherapy and further our understanding of the brain.

This presentation explores the historical, anthropological, neurophysiological and spiritual aspects of psychedelic drugs and their uses by humans as agents of healing and for understanding the mind. It also asks

us to consider mistakes made by the previous psychedelic pioneers and plan a more constructive, dispassionate and scientific debate of these substances for the future.

About the speaker:

Ben is a consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist working in Somerset in an in-patient adolescent unit near Taunton. Prior to that post he was in higher specialist training in Oxford, before that training as an SHO in London and in medicine at University College London.

Ben came to psychiatry with a previous degree training in psychology, where he developed a healthy scepticism of the medical model, fuelled by an interest in Anti-Psychiatry. His interest in psychedelics and other routes to the non-ordinary states of consciousness pre-dates involvement in medicine. In June 2005 he had an editorial published in the British Journal of Psychiatry entitled: *Can Psychedelics have a role in Psychiatry Again?* Since then he has enjoyed bringing together the strands of the historical psychedelic movement from the 1950s and 1960s with the contemporary advances in this field.

Ben has been involved with the SIG since attending the conference on 'Beyond Death' in April 2004, and finds the group, with it's unique blend of religions from all denominations, sceptics, philosophers and neuroscientists offering a broad and stimulating atmosphere in which to debate the contentious origin of the 'spiritual experience', the role of religion in human development and the value of considering spiritual issues in the healing process.