

Annual Report 2011



Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group

The Spirituality & Psychiatry SIG has had a good year. We have continued to engage in debate about the place of spirituality in psychiatry, at conferences, through publications and in contribution to the life and work of the College. Our membership now stands at 2575.

At the College Annual Meeting in Edinburgh in June 2010 the SPSIG contributed a session on "Psychosis and Spirituality", chaired by me. Dr Susan Mitchell contributed a paper on Spiritual Aspects of Psychosis and Recovery, and Professor Malcolm Peet and Dr Justin Marley together contributed a paper reporting their research findings on "Spiritual Beliefs and Psychosis".

Two day conferences were held during the course of the year. In October 2010 a meeting on "Intolerant Secularisation" provided a lively debate on issues concerned with spirituality and religion in the clinical workplace, contributed to by Professor Andrew Sims, Lord Carey, Andrea Williams QC, Professor Rob Poole, and Dr Easha Tareen. In March 2011 a meeting was held under the title "Spirituality and the Divided Brain". Canon Andrew Shanks and Professor Peter Fenwick engaged in debate with Dr Iain McGilchrist on themes relevant to spirituality emerging from Dr McGilchrist's book *The Master and his Emissary*. Owing to the costs of using 15 Belgrave Square, which has been our regular day conference venue in recent years, both events this year were held in the Council Room at the College. However, this has enabled us to maintain delegate costs at only £70 and has helped to maintain a sounder financial balance.

During the course of the year the Executive has continued work on developing an online CPD module on spirituality. We are aware that other members of the College are also contributing material of this kind, subject to the usual peer review process (which is implemented by the College, according to its policy for such things). We are also working on a proposal for a training day on Spirituality and Psychiatry to be run with the support of the College Education and Training Centre.

We were pleased to be able to award the SPSIG Essay Prize again this year, on this occasion to a 4th year medical student. Two issues of our Newsletter were published, and the website, which has had a major overhaul during the year, has been maintained and edited by Dr Andrew Powell.

On behalf of the Executive, Dr Sarah Eagger made a presentation to the Service User Recovery Forum (SURF) and Carers Forum which was well received. This is being followed up with a questionnaire survey on the views of service users and carers on spirituality and psychiatry, including views on the role played by SPSIG.

An important piece of work this year has been the development of a draft position statement on Spirituality and Religion in Psychiatry, which was presented to the College Policy Committee in January. At the time of writing this is in a process of redrafting which we hope might eventually lead to its formal adoption as an agreed College position statement.

A number of changes have taken place within the Executive. Dr Nicki Crowley stood down in the autumn, having been a member for many years, and we are enormously grateful for the long and unstinting service that she has given to the SPSIG. Dr Anjum Bashir stood down in April, and our thanks are also extended to him. Professor Simon Dein continues as secretary and Dr Oyepeju Raji as programme coordinator. Dr Paramabandhu Groves was appointed as Treasurer, taking over from Dr Suryanarayan at the Annual College Meeting. We have welcomed Dr Alison Gray and Dr Sophie Thomson as new members of our Executive Committee. At the time of writing, we also hope soon to announce another new appointment to the Executive.

Spirituality and psychiatry are concerned, amongst other things, with relationship. People find meaning in relationships with themselves, other people, and a wider experience of reality. The SPSIG provides a forum within which we may relate to one another and explore issues that are important to us and to our patients. We hope that this will continue to be a place of spiritual growth and development which will support our members in both their professional practice and personal vocation.

Professor Chris Cook
8th April 2011