

News from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted and honoured to be the new chair of the Spirituality SIG. It's clearly a new opportunity for me to learn yet again how to maintain the equilibrium between work and personal life. Still, I feel the spiritual task for me is to try and keep one foot in the 'stillness that remains beyond' while looking down to check that the other is firmly placed on the ground in front of me.

The SIG is involved in many activities. A new College curriculum is being drawn up in the light of the rigours of PMETB and we have reconvened our 'educational objectives working group' that we hope will have some influence on the curriculum concerning trainees' sensitivities to people's spiritual beliefs and needs. We are also establishing links with The World Psychiatric Association. It, too, has a section on religion, spirituality and psychiatry. We are sending a representative to a new spiritual research group set up by Peter Gilbert and John Swinton. The Chief Nursing Officer has recently circulated a consultation document reviewing mental health nursing in England. We are responding to this and, in particular, the specific section asking how mental health nurses can best support service users' spiritual needs/religious beliefs.

The programme remains full and varied with forthcoming study days in Learning Disability and Old Age. We invite you to support them. If you feel there are any other topics that could be fruitfully explored, please do let us know. The good news is that our workshop suggestions for next year's college Annual Meeting in Glasgow have been accepted and we will be presenting 'United in Spirit - the place of spiritual enquiry in the clinical assessment' as well as meditation workshops. On another note I am currently exploring what the policy is for spiritual care within my own mental health trust. It's no surprise to learn that some trusts have one and others don't. It would be interesting to share information about this and see whether we could remedy the situation. We are also hoping to strengthen our links with the Indian and Pakistani British Psychiatric associations.

Also don't forget about the SIG prize (worth £250). I'm sure there are some trainees who just need a little encouragement. This prize is awarded annually to the best entry (or best joint entries) furthering the issue of spirituality as it relates to psychiatry and to enhance psychiatric practice and improve the quality of care delivered to patients and carers. Full details are provided in Newsletter No. 15.

As you can see, there's more than enough to keep the SIG executive out of mischief!

May peace be with us all in this busy world,

Dr. Sarah Egger