

Spirit Possession and Mental Health Conference

An Ethnic Health Initiative

(www.bme-mentalhealth.org.uk)

29th June 2009 London

Spirit possession is recognised world wide across many cultures and by several religions. Spirit possession is often seen as an idiom of distress causing a change in behaviour and mental well being. Spirit possession is also included in the ICD 10 and DSM IV classifications of mental disorders, yet the extent to which it is recognised and / or discussed in clinical practice is less than we would expect, even in UK cities where there resides a diverse population.

This one-day event will consider the critical themes and debates on spirit possession from an anthropological, social, psychological, medical and religious perspective using a range of illustrative case study, clinical practice, research and short film presentations.

The aims of the conference:

Discuss possible definitions of and different kinds of spirit possession
Debate the key elements which typify spirit possession
Discuss who can make a diagnosis of spirit possession and how such a diagnosis might be made
Compare and contrast how spirit possession might be viewed by clinicians, religious leaders, healers, the "patient", family and community members
Discuss the value of using the patient's explanatory model of the illness
Reflect upon the key issues associated with defining what is "normal" and abnormal"
Discuss folk healing practices in different cultures and "treatment" options including exorcism
Consider whether there is a need to enhance joint working between mental health professionals and traditional healers.

Programme:

9.00 – 9.30	Registration, Tea & Coffee
9.30 – 9.45	Opening Melba Wilson (DRE Programme, DoH)
9.45 – 10.00	Chair Professor Sashi Sashidharan
10.00 – 10.50	Anthropological Approaches to Understanding and Working with Spirit Possession Dr. Simon Dein

- 10.50 – 11.40 **Mental Health Problems and Spirit Possession in North Indian Healing Shrines** Dr. Antti Pakaslahti
- 11.40 – 12.00 **Morning session Q&A**
- 12.00 – 1.00 **Lunch**
- 1.00 – 1.50 **Jinn & Possession: The Muslim Perspective** Dr. Tim Hardie & Dr. Najat Khalifa
- 1.50 – 2.40 **Spirit Possession in the Caribbean Diaspora today: A Hermeneutic Challenge** Dr. Bettina Schmidt
- 2.40 – 3.00 Tea & Coffee
- 3.00 – 3.50 **The Therapeutic Approach of the Spirit Release Foundation to Mental Health** Dr. Andrew Powell
- 3.50 – 4.00 **Afternoon session Q&A**
- 4.00 – 4.30 **Plenary & Closure**

Bookings: bookings.bme@googlemail.co.uk

Venue: RICH MIX, 35 - 47 Bethnal Green Road, London, E1 6LA

Full venue details and travel directions can be found at: www.richmix.org.uk

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