

# Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group Annual Report 2009



The Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group continues to expand its activities, and its membership has increased during the year to over 2000. In addition to the SIG's own regular meetings, it has taken part in the Annual Meeting of the College as well as other College activities and continues to contribute to many other outside conferences.

At the 2008 College Annual Meeting, the SIG held a programme on '*Soul Matters: The Role of Spirituality in the treatment of Mental Illness*'. Julia Head spoke on 'Recovery and Spiritual and Pastoral Care Services - a working model', Dr. Paramabandhu Groves on 'Spiritual Help: a Buddhist perspective' and Dr. Avdesh Sharma on 'Meditation: the future medication?' Drs. Eagger and Culliford conducted their popular workshop '*Keeping Body and Mind Together - meditation made simple*' for the fifth time.

One-day meetings held at the College over the year include 'Researching Spirituality: paradigms and empirical findings' (February 2008), 'Mindfulness, Meditation and Mental Health' (November 2008) and 'Consciousness and the Extended Mind' (April 2009). At this year's College Annual Meeting in Liverpool we held a session on 'Where Paths meet: Psychiatrists in a multifaith society', again with the meditation workshop.

The SIG book 'Spirituality and Psychiatry' (eds. Christopher Cook, Andrew Powell and Andrew Sims) was published by RCPsych Publications in June 2009. We continue to develop an online CPD module on assessing patients' spiritual needs. The SIG leaflet on Spirituality and Mental Health continues to be a valued resource, available in hard copy from the College or as a 'topics' download from the College website homepage. We await the response to our submission for incorporating spirituality into the new College curriculum, delayed due to the PMETB review.

The SIG Executive was unable to award an essay prize for the year due to lack of valid submissions but wishes to encourage submissions that fulfil the criteria set out on the SIG website homepage. We have also extended the prize to medical students. Our next closing date will be the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009.

Our website continues to publish regular Newsletters, with information about meetings and a publications archive of papers by members of the SIG and invited others. Useful contacts with allied disciplines continue to grow and the recent past Chair (Dr. Eagger) is now a trustee of the National Mental Health and Spirituality Forum.

The Executive Committee continues to represent a broad range of faiths and belief systems supporting our aim that the SIG should be a forum for psychiatrists to explore the influence of the major religions, which shape the cultural values and aspirations of psychiatrist and patient alike. The spiritual aspirations of persons not identifying with any one particular faith are held to be of no less importance, as well as the viewpoint of those who hold that spirituality is independent of religion.

At the College Annual meeting, Dr. Sarah Eagger retired from the Chair, her successor being Professor Chris Cook. The finance officer Dr. Tim Read likewise retired, being replaced by Dr. Geetha Suryanarayan. Dr. Simon Dein continues as Honorary Secretary and Dr. Oyepaju Raji as Programme Co-ordinator. Dr. Jameel Hussain is the trainee's representative. Dr. Andrew Powell continues as Editor for the SIG website and Newsletter. Welcome to Dr. Paramabandhu Groves and Dr. Anjum Bashir who have joined the Executive. Our warm thanks to Drs. Larry Culliford, Robert Lawrence and Sumudu Chandraratne who recently retired from the Executive and to all those office bearers and Executive members who have worked tirelessly throughout the year on behalf of the SIG.