From the Incoming Chair

Paramabandhu Groves will be a hard act to follow. His calm, thoughtful style has helped the Executive Committee (Exec) to think through challenging times and to consolidate our position as a source of significant teaching on spirituality in mental health. Thank you Paramabandhu!

We are glad to welcome Lucy Grimwade as the Exec secretary and Christopher Findlay to continue as treasurer. Thanks to them and to all the Exec members for their hard work.

The next few years will continue to be challenging in terms of austerity and of the many major changes our country is currently undergoing. Now, more than ever, people need to rediscover the resources that the great spiritual traditions offer to sustain and nurture the spirit of the caregiver under the tremendous pressure of the modern NHS.

The SIG is a diverse group and in the Exec we have members of the major religions and of the ‘spiritual but not religious’ demographic.Whilst we can all agree that there is much more to life than what we can taste, touch and measure and that spiritual practices are important in our own lives, our worldviews differ. Hence the SIG rarely takes a position on specific issues. Instead, we use our conferences to explore our different approaches and our common ground.

Feedback from our April meeting was overwhelmingly positive. The conference was well attended, with excellent speakers (and me), lively discussions and passionate expression of differing viewpoints on stigma, spirituality and mental health. Several people said they preferred the friendliness of the table layout, rather than lecture theatre style. We will aim to use the tables again when numbers allow.

We will have an open meeting during the RCPsych International Congress, as a platform for the SPSIG and for the Exec to hear the views of members. This will be in the Menteith Room at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, **Wednesday 28th June 2017**, 12.45-13.40. A sandwich lunch will be provided (you must be booked into the congress on that day to be able to attend).

This follows the session **S33** (11.30-12.45) where SPSIG members will be speaking on ‘The intersection of spirituality and mental health among diverse and disadvantaged populations’.

Our winter day conference is **Friday 8th December 2017**, ‘Bringing Compassion into Mental Healthcare’, with top rate speakers on compassion, and afternoon workshops to ground theory in practical application. Further information and bookings at [http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/traininpsychiatry/conferencestraining/conferences/spsigconference-dec2017.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/traininpsychiatry/conferencestraining/conferences/spsigconference-dec2017.aspx)
Whilst we welcome all-comers to our conferences, our focus is on encouraging psychiatrists to recognize the value of spirituality both personally and professionally, and to respond appropriately to spiritual issues raised by their patients/clients/service users. To this end, on 16th March 2018, our conference will be restricted to College members and fellows, to allow for more personal discussion and sharing of challenges. This will be a low cost event, with a maximum of 50 attendees; booking details will be circulated nearer the date.

Our winter 2018 conference (which will be an open event) is booked for Nov 9th 2018. Do save the date; further details to follow.

We acknowledge that our conferences are London-centred, and we look forward to supporting small groups from around the country in developing programs that the SPSIG Exec can endorse. These can then be delivered locally ‘in association with the RCPsych Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group.’ Please contact us via the College if you wish to discuss the possibility of an SPSIG meeting near to you. The Exec can help with suggesting potential speakers, advising on the program, and pointing out some of the potential pitfalls.

I am glad to take over chairing the Spirituality SIG and helping to build on the foundations laid by all the past chairs and its Exec and members. Please let us know what topics you would like covered, what your issues and challenges are and how we can best equip you. I look forward to hearing from you, and meeting you at forthcoming conferences.

Dr Alison J Gray