

Proposed amendments to the curriculum for basic specialist training and the MRCPsych examination.

The Educational Objectives Working Group, chaired by Dr. Culliford, has recently put forward a detailed submission to the Royal College for the forthcoming revision in 2003 of the curriculum for basic specialist training and the MRCPsych examination. In addition to proposed amendments to the body of the text, a stand-alone section has been submitted, which is reproduced below. The Dean, Professor Katona, supports the publication of this report of the Working Group so that feed-back may be obtained by the SIG ahead of the revisions to be undertaken next year.

Report of the Educational Objectives Working Group, Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group.

Historical perspective

The trainee should be able to demonstrate awareness of, and sensitivity to, the interface of spirituality/religion and psychiatric practice with reference to its historical development and current status

Spiritual aspects of clinical work and associated teaching

The trainee should be able to demonstrate awareness of spiritual aspects of psychiatry arising from:

- The need to find a sense of meaning and purpose in life
- The personal search for answers to deeper questions concerning birth, life and death
- The difference between spirituality and religion, and their inter-relatedness
- The relationship of spirituality to the development and expression of individual human values
- How spirituality informs concepts of good and evil

The trainee should be able to demonstrate a working knowledge of:

- Spiritual crises, meditation, prayer and altered states of consciousness, including Near Death Experiences (NDEs)
- The spiritual significance of anxiety, doubt, guilt and shame
- The spiritual importance of love, altruism and forgiveness, and their relation to mental health
- The influence of materialistic goals on personal identity and self-esteem
- The reciprocal relationship between culture and spiritual/religious beliefs and practices, and the consequences for psychiatric practice
- How to take a spiritual history from a patient
- How the presence or absence of spiritual/religious beliefs and practices in mental healthcare workers may influence clinical decision-making
- The role in clinical management of spiritual/religious support networks, including chaplaincy and pastoral care departments as well as those in the community

Research

The trainee should be able to demonstrate familiarity with:

- The application of both quantitative and qualitative research to the field of spirituality and psychiatric practice
- The findings of epidemiological studies relating spirituality to mental health variables
- The introduction of spiritual values in the design and execution of research
- Validated instruments for measuring spiritual and religious beliefs
- The contribution of research to understanding the neuro-physiology and efficacy of prayer, meditation, forgiveness and love

Spiritual attitudes and values

The trainee should be able to demonstrate:

- Awareness that good medical practice is founded on values which include discernment, compassion, generosity, tolerance, patience, honesty, humility and wisdom
- Awareness of how his/her own value systems may impact on others
- Sensitivity to, and tolerance of, the value systems of others
- An understanding of the concept of spiritual development as part of personal growth

Clinical skills based on spiritual values

The trainee should be able to demonstrate competence in:

- Being able to stay mentally focused in the present, remaining alert and attentive with equanimity
- Developing the capacity to witness and endure distress while sustaining an attitude of hope
- The recognition of his/her own counter-transference responses to spiritual disclosures
- Honest self-appraisal, in the interests of continuing personal development
- Maintaining personal well-being in the interests of patient care

Editor's note: Comment on the above proposal would be welcomed. Please email to rcpsych@rcpsych.ac.uk with subject box addressed to 'Spirituality / for Dr. Andrew Powell'