

Transcultural Psychiatry Special Interest Group (TSIG)

Newsletter, Summer 2023



TSIG Editorial Team

TSIG Chair:

Dr Fabida Aria, MBBS, FRCPsych

Editor:

Dr Emmeline Lagunes-Cordoba, MBBS, MSc, PhD

Finance Officer:

Dr Parveen Kumar, MBBS, FRCPsych

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Message from the TSIG Chair

Welcome to our newsletter!

2023 has been an eventful year for our special interest group. Our members have contributed to many events, whether they are conferences, psychiatry societies at universities or sessions on transcultural psychiatry to wider colleagues, we can see a growing interest in this area. Our executive members have contributed to many events, and this has been very much appreciated.

We also know there is a lot of untapped expertise among our own membership. We are keen to hear from you about your thoughts and experiences on transcultural psychiatry and how we, as a special interest group can help. In the last year we have made more connections with other special interest groups and discussed about future joint events; and also, our many diaspora groups and are planning some joint webinars and events too. You will see many examples of such events in our newsletter.

In the last few years, we have seen our college do more and more in terms of raising the need for equality, and leading by example with the ambitious Equality action plan, and has shown how to deliver on these. In June 2023 there was the launch of the Act against racism which is the next step towards progressing towards equity and equality.

We of course cannot ignore the wider world events that have occurred and how these have impacted the mental health of citizens across the globe and transcultural psychiatry is further evolving with more migration, mass movements, wars, environmental disasters, political unrest, climate change and other events.

As one of the largest special interest groups, we are keen to continue to increase our collective knowledge and expertise in transcultural psychiatry and welcome contributions from our members.

We are keen to meet you at the RCPsych International Congress in Liverpool, we have a slot on July 11th reserved at 10.30 am, so, please take some time to say hello and share ideas about transcultural psychiatry.

Thank you!

Dr Fabida Aria



Notes from the editor

This year we were very sad to cancel our annual Transcultural Psychiatry conference, due to take place in March, at the RCPsych in London. We know many other conferences have been recently cancelled due to different circumstances, but mainly associated with reduced attendance. Although this was a hard decision for us, members from the TSIG committee, as well as leaders from our college, have continued engaging in discussions and promoting the need of considering people's cultural backgrounds and context, to provide better clinical care.

In this edition, we highlight some of events which took place this year, in the UK and abroad, in which members of the TSIG committee had the opportunity not only of speaking about topics related to transcultural psychiatry, involving even presidents of other nations, but also of developing actual programmes aiming to improve the mental health of people in other countries, please read about the great effort Dr Hasanen Al-Taïar, along with others, have done to support people in Palestine. We also invite you to read the two short but lovely pieces written by Dr Ayesha Ahmad on Solastalgia, and Dr Saadia Alvi on cultural events; two pieces with lots of heart and wise words.

We are thankful of the opportunities and support we have received by our college, and particularly by our exiting president Dr Adrian James, who has continuously engaged with all the diaspora groups (you can read more about this in this edition), promoting the wellbeing of those who frequently face more challenges in their everyday practice, mainly IMGs, SAS doctors and doctors from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Although we'll miss working with him, we are also very looking forward to start working with our next president Dr Lade Smith, who has also made clear the importance of supporting these clinicians and of course, of collaborate with our TSIG. Similarly, we are looking forward to collaborating with more members from the RCPsych, or anyone interested in transcultural psychiatry, so we invite you to use this platform to share your ideas and help us improve the mental health of those we are aiming to help, no matter where in the world they are coming from, we all are part of a culture which needs to be taken in consideration.

Dr Emmeline Lagunes-Cordoba



Past TSIG activities 2023

RCPsych Diaspora event

In February 2023 we were part of the diaspora group meeting and joined colleagues from the international team and our diaspora committees to discuss on collaborations. The diaspora group was founded by Professor Bhaumik who was a real force of support for everyone, mainly those from diverse backgrounds, who were joining the college. This event represented an opportunity to pay tribute to his vision for the group, as he sadly he passed away in 2019; however, his legacy continues in many ways.

Dr Ananta Dave, chair of the diaspora group, along with Dr Adrian James, college President, the college international team, and the chairs or representatives of the eight diaspora groups, including the transcultural psychiatry special interest group, discussed many plans for collaborations, including increasing the role of transcultural psychiatry, as well as improving equality and diversity within the college, and supporting international medical graduates.



Transcultural SIG group executives' participation in BPPA events

RCPsych Transcultural SIG former Chair, Dr Shahid Latif in his current role as Chair of BPPA (British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association) along with fellow BPPA executives was invited to a meeting with the President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi (virtually) and First Lady and their team in person in February 2023. The agenda was to discuss how to set up a National mental health AI chatbot helpline in Pakistan. The objective was to look collate data plus signpost those experiencing MH problems to appropriate services.



thematic conference. Dr Shahid Latif and BPPA colleagues were invited to present at the conference and run workshops. and introduced. Dr Adrian James presented a seminar on "Global challenges for Psychiatry".

Dr Adrian James highlighted contribution of BPPA in mental health and Psychiatry within Royal college of Psychiatrists. It is acknowledged that mental health issues are on the rise in Pakistan post Pandemic and there is need for everyone to come together and help raise awareness around stigma attached to mental illness and help people get appropriate help and support in a timely manner.



In March 2023, the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) invited BPPA and the Royal College of Psychiatrist President Dr Adrian James to Karachi, Pakistan. This was a regional



Dr Shahid Latif, Dr Rahat Ghafoor, Dr Saima Niaz Ana the wider BPPA executives team organised and attended the BPPA summer annual conference, gala dinner, and mushaira on 13th May 2023 at Radisson blue hotel, Derby. The theme for conference was "Is Mental health everyone's business?"



The conference was attended by team of specialists representing World Psychiatric Association (WPA) and Pakistani Psychiatric Society from Pakistan along with a large number of Pakistani Psychiatrists working in the UK. RCPsych President-elect Dr Lade Smith, RCPsych Dean Dr Subodh Dave, Dr Ananta Dave, Dr Derek Tracey (Editor public engagement BJPsych), President of British Indian Psychiatric association (BIPA) Bhavana Chawda and APPNE team attended and participated in the CPD event.



Dr Shahid Latif gave an update from last year on BPPA activities and accomplishments. Dr Lade Smith then talked about RCPsych direction and future goals. Prof Afzal Javed reflected on what Psychiatry needs to achieve during the 21st century. Dr Derek Tracey talked about legal highs: understanding novel psychoactive substances in contemporary but non-specialist mental health services. Dr Hesham Reza shared his knowledge on AI in Psychiatry and Prof Subodh Dave talked about Data and digital literacy as a critical skill. Pakistani Psychiatric association members gave an overview of psychiatric services in Pakistan and hurdles in the way of accessing and providing quality mental health services.



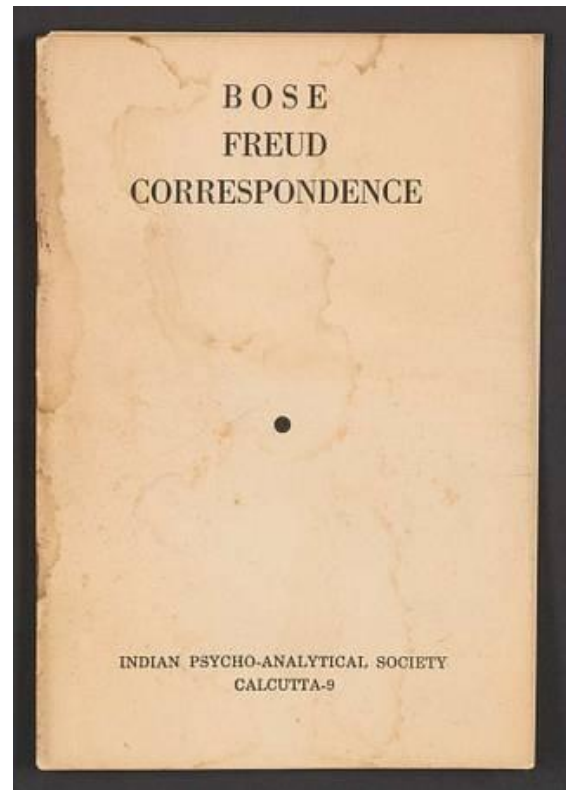


The event attracted 3 CPD points pending peer group approval. It was followed by an exclusive poetry session led by famous poets from Pakistan, dinner and then a musical evening which was enjoyed by all participants. The conference was overall a huge success and received 5-stars feedback from participants on the quality of the whole event.

Dr Rahat Ghafoor & Dr Shahid Latif
Consultant psychiatrists

TSIG Executive committee meeting and Dr Arabinda Brahma talk

In June 2023 we hold our first hybrid executive meeting of the year, in which members were able to join online or to meet with us face to face at the RCPsych premises in London. On this day, we have the honour of having as a guest speaker, Dr Arabinda Brahma, secretary of the Indian psychiatry society, who shared how the Indian psychiatry society had started a transcultural psychiatry arm in recent years. This has created more opportunities for symposiums, masterclasses, workshops and research focused on transcultural psychiatry. Dr Brahma also delighted us with a talk on culture and mental health, describing how the Indian Psychoanalytical society, which just celebrated its 100 years in 2022, was established in Calcutta in 1922 by Dr Girindra Sekhar Bose, who set was supported by Dr Sigmund Freud himself. During this talk, Dr Brahma shared some excerpts of the correspondence between Girindra Bose and Sigmund Freud, which are remarkable pieces of history, pieces which the Indian Psychoanalytical society has published under the title Bose- Freud Correspondence :1921-1937.



Dr Fabida Aria
Consultant psychiatrists

Other events and activities

Annual National Conference of Indian Psychiatric Society, January 2023

In January 2023 some of the TSIG executive committee members, had the opportunity of attending the ANCIPS (Annual National Conference of Indian Psychiatric Society) in India, where we not only had the opportunity of meeting colleagues from India, USA, Australia, but also of giving a presentation on the transcultural special interest group.

First, Professor AN Chowdhury gave a talk focused on ecopsychiatry, the effects of climate change, and on how human activities are causing an increase in global warming. He shared insights on how global warming has caused a huge impact on many parts of the world, affecting many countries and people, especially from lower socioeconomic status, which in consequence, has impacted on people's mental health. He also spoke about the moral need for doctors to take a leadership role in making changes in areas they can influence, and in educating and inspiring others to consider ways to reduce their carbon footprint. Topics which are very relevant to transcultural psychiatry.



At the ANCIP, I was also able to give a talk focused on the historical context of the special interest group, which started at the Royal college of Psychiatrists around the mid 80's, when the college was approached by some members, who were keen on setting up committees to look at matters related to ethnicity, an idea that the college welcomed, recognising the need for change, and supporting members to have a voice. We have to appreciate how our college has a long history of support for their members. Over the years many members of these committees and the transcultural psychiatry group attended and contributed to discussions at the House of Lords and House of Parliament, to discuss matters related to ethnicity and mental health care. We know we are still facing many issues associated with ethnicity and mental health; however, we have also come a long way in some areas, but there is still a lot of work to do.

During this conference, I was also able to share some ideas and opportunities to increase networks and links between different organisations to promote transcultural psychiatry, for example by encouraging people to seek roles in other RCPsych departments, academic psychiatry, universities, medical leadership, and so on, to help us all grow together. As I strongly believe that with collaboration, we can create and share a database of examples of what works across various cultures, keeping in mind the impact of migration, climate change and multicultural influences, on individual, also recognising their own unique attributes.

Other topics discussed, were focused on ways to reduce inequalities, the need of more

research on this area, as well as the need of developing joint service and initiatives across different countries. Finally, I encouraged attendees to promote transcultural psychiatry as a specialty, as we consider clinicians, no matter where in the world, need to take into consideration, how culture influences people's mental health and wellbeing, to better understand patients' needs and develop tailored treatment plans that would be in line with individuals' culture, traditions and beliefs.

Anyone who would like to collaborate with the Transcultural Psychiatry Special Interest Group, can contact us via the email- sigs@rcpsych.ac.uk



Dr Fabida Aria
Consultant psychiatrists
TSIG Chair.

Medical Aid for Palestinians

The Royal College of Psychiatrists, in collaboration with the Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) organized a mission to train mental health professionals in Bethlehem psychiatric hospital in Palestine. The Team comprised of Dr Hasanen Al-Taïar, forensic psychiatry consultant (Oxford); Mr Tom McDade, clinical trainer (Leicester Partnership Trust); Andy Robinson, clinical trainer (Leicester Partnership Trust); and Dr Sabina Bera, inpatient psychiatrist (New York, USA).

Run from Sunday May 7th to Thursday May 11th, 2023, the objective of this mission was to understand the challenges related to de-escalation and management of agitation on inpatient psychiatric wards at Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital. The observations and data gathered during this mission aimed to develop recommendations to improve safety for patients, family members, and staff, which in turn will lead to improved care and clinical outcomes for patients. Future recommendations would include a protocol for management of agitation and a needs assessment for inpatient psychiatric wards at Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital.



Hearing from the staff (consisting of nurses, doctors, and their leadership) about the challenges faced regarding management of agitation. This included concerns about staffing shortages, challenging patient populations, and concern for their own safety and the safety of their patients.

There were challenges in managing patients who appeared to be verbally aggressive, especially in cases where patients made demeaning or offensive statements to staff. Staff had also concerns about physically intimidating patients who became agitated. They also described scenarios where one incident would lead to an increased level of agitation in the milieu. Staff reported that seclusion is used often in these scenarios.

Initial interventions would be piloted and monitored in the Women's and Men's Acute Wards, as this is where most incidents occur. Principles and protocols regarding de-escalation and management of agitation should be implemented hospital wide. Protocols may be posted in the form of posters or documents on inpatient wards. Operating within set standards may also address staff's concerns regarding retaliation after intervening with an agitated patient.

This was a very interesting and rewarding training programme that aimed to build professional capacity and teach the learners safe ways of managing their patients. We hope that this would become a sustainable long-term programme, as the trainees will continue delivering this training to colleagues, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to attend it.

Dr Hasanen Al-Taïar
Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist

British Indian Psychiatric Association Conference

The BIPA conference had excellent speakers and a range of topics. Dr Adrian James, Dr Lade Smith and Dr Subodh Dave all spoke on the remarkable achievements and future plans for the college. There were academic presentations on Newer developments on OCD treatments by Dr Hinashu Tyagi, technological developments for doctors well-being by Dr Roshelle Ramkisson, a panel discussion chaired by Dr Ananta Dave and including Dr Girish Kunigiri, Dr Arun Chidambaram, Dr Sandeep Kumar and Dr Fabida Aria to inspire doctors to take up leadership roles. Dr Sandeep Kumar is a SAS doctor who has a leadership role as associate medical Director for SAS doctors, which is a unique post and has been really successful at his Trust. We had further talks on human rights by Dr Anis Ahmed and ADHD by Dr Indu Dubey.



On day 2 we had an enlightening talk by Dr Shabbir Aminullah on dementia, on psychedelics by Dr Ben Sassa, on transcultural psychiatry by Dr Arabinda Brahma, on treatments for neurodiversity by Prof Rohit Shankar, on personality disorder and ICD 11 by Dr Jonathan Hurlow, on ketamine in digital psychiatry by Dr Amit Chogale, on social media by Dr Raja Adnan Ahmed (who is well known for his support for so many international medical graduates), About coroners, criminal and civil courts following patients death by Dr Dinesh Maganty, on medicolegal practice by Dr Pratish Thakkar and Dr Ramneesh Puri. Dr Moj Feshki and Mr Sattar (producer) showed a clip of a powerful award winning movie 'Golnaseen' which portrayed the current challenges faced by women in Iran by presenting a powerful story. Dr Feshki presented a timeline of the history of women's empowerment in Iran and generated a lot of discussion on recent events and impact on mental health.



Open invitation

We welcome the work done by diaspora organisations, and we hope to have member from more diaspora organisations to share summaries of their events. We would love to add them to our newsletter to help promote the excellent work they do in the UK and abroad and help inspire our readers and learn more about transcultural psychiatry.



Culture, thoughts and words

Speaking 'Solastalgia-Suffering' in Psychiatry

Over four days, Land Body Ecologies hosted a festival on Solastalgia as part of the Wellcome Hub Award. We are a multi-disciplinary team of human rights activists, expert communities, mental health researchers, scientists, and artists. Solastalgia refers to a philosophical concept of bearing mental distress because of environmental changes (Albrecht, 2015). We hosted storytelling sessions of marginalised narratives about land rights, hive-making, culinary, and basket weaving workshops that represented cultural expressions of the land, and academic discussions from interdisciplinary studies. The hub was alive with the meeting of travelling cultures and communications and was a beautiful interaction of humanity displayed through harmonised friendships and kinships.

At the heart of the project are Indigenous communities including the Ogiek in Kenya, the Sámi in Finland, the Batwa in Uganda, the Pgak'yau (Karen) in Northern Thailand, as well as communities living in the buffer zones of the Bannerghatta National Park in India.



We call for the advocacy of mental health professionals to recognise that “Traumas of the land have been buried, and the expressions of land trauma have been silenced... We need to discover where the world’s wounds are, and to guide the global mental health movement to a collective healing whereby the rupture between the environment and mental health is re-threaded with renewed ways of living and dying” (Ahmad, 2022). Transcultural psychiatric paradigms have made great strides in critiquing post-traumatic stress disorder and its meanings across cultural settings. But without adequate understanding of the suffering endured by communities affected by land traumas and violence (Ahmad et al, 2023).

What we are learning from the woven narratives of Land Body Ecologies is that healing is a quest that demands voice as much as speaking to suffering. I would hope that renewed discourses in practicing psychiatry can help us to reimagine what being well, and what being healed, means through listening to the traumas, violence, and hopes that the land bears on our stories. Solastalgia-suffering is not the antithesis to healing—rather, through understanding ways we suffer during disruptions to our connections to land because of displacement, disasters, or other forms of destruction, we have a chance to find creative ways to express health by healing the land through self and self through land.

Dr. Ayesha Ahmad
 Reader, Global Health Humanities
 St. George's University of London
 Email: aahmad@sgul.ac.uk
 Land Body Ecologies:
www.landbodyecologies.com

Cultural events, a rich source to get insight into minoritised ethnic diverse culture and social norms.

The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular group of people or society has always fascinated me. The UK being a multicultural society has allowed me to observe different religions, religious and social events, and the cultural values of different nations which in turn has strengthened my abilities as a psychiatrist. To me, it's very important to know a patient as a 'Person' which would then help a psychiatrist to manage a patient in the best possible way.

Muslims have been celebrating 'Chand Raat' for centuries. It is a time of celebration when families and friends gather in open areas at the end of the last day of Ramadan to spot the new moon, which signals the arrival of the Islamic month of Shawwal and the day of Eid.



Most recently, I had an opportunity to include members of other religions and cultures to be part of this fun-filled event. I organised this event with the help of the local council in Grimsby. It was attended by **Former Mayor of Grimsby Christina McGilligan-Fell** and **West Marsh councillor Cllr Marian Boyd**. This event brought together people from diverse cultures and religious backgrounds. It was attended by a large number of people and was very well perceived. It provided people with the opportunity to know each other, to know each other's religion and cultural values. The whole

crowd was delighted by the richness of traditional food, dresses, Henna tattoos and jewellery stalls. The high school children taught the importance of such cultural events to the younger children of local schools. The event successfully delivers the message of peace and harmony among different nations of United Kingdom.

On the same note, I assisted the organization of a music festival called 'Qawwali Night'. 'Qawwali' is a **form of Sufi Islamic devotional singing**, originating in the Indian subcontinent. Qawwali is sung with a powerful soaring chorus and accompanied by the energetic rhythms of 'tabla' and group clapping, the glory of life is celebrated with ecstatic dance. It was amazing to see how people speaking different languages enjoyed the event which shows that music has no boundaries. It was interesting to see how the English-speaking audience wanted to know the English translation of the poetry sung. The event was attended and much appreciated by **MP Lia Nici-Townend**.

I am very thankful to the local council and MP to support these events. In my view, it is imperative to have such events to promote togetherness in a multicultural society.



Dr Saadia Alvi

ST6 GAP

Future events

Transcultural Special Interest Group Annual Conference 2024, RCPsych. Date TBC.

Although we still don't have a date, we hope you can join us at our 2024 TSIG annual conference. Please check on our future emails to learn when we will host our conference, so you can have the opportunity of hearing great talks focused on transcultural psychiatry.

Iraqi Psychiatric Association (IPA), November 23th – 24th, Baghdad, Iraq.

Join the largest gathering of professional, researchers and experts in the field of mental health and psychiatry, to discuss and share knowledge about the latest developments, research, results and treatment methods.