

WHO/WAPR consensus statement jointly endorsed in 1996, psychosocial rehabilitation is defined as a process that facilitates the opportunity for individuals impaired, disabled or handicapped by a mental disorder to reach their optimal level of functioning in the community. It implies both improving individuals' competencies and introducing environmental changes in order to improve their quality of life.

It is therefore clear that psychosocial rehabilitation is a complex and ambitious strategy encompassing many different sectors and levels, centred on the relation between the individual with a mental disability and society as a whole. In consequence, the bodies involved with psychosocial rehabilitation are varied, and their means and tools vary as well, depending on the geographic, cultural, economic, political, social and organisational characteristics of the settings in which care is provided.

Within this broad frame of reference, the WAPR's activities cover a number of areas:

- promotion of national and international legislation, policies and programmes to meet the basic and special needs of people with a mental illness
- international exchange of experiences and best practices in the field of rehabilitation of mental disorders
- organisation of training opportunities for health professionals, to introduce strategies for psychosocial rehabilitation in specialist and primary health care services
- consultation to local, national and international agencies

to promote improved care, rehabilitation and services for people with a mental illness

- educational programmes to ensure maximum public, professional and government understanding of the needs and rights of people with disabling mental illnesses
- enhancement of the development and organisation of consumers' and families' associations, and mutual and self-help groups of individuals and carers affected by disabling mental illnesses
- promotion of open dialogue among consumers, policy makers and professionals
- collaboration with the UN, the WHO and the International Labour Office, by supporting the strategies for the treatment and rehabilitation of people with a mental disability within a community-based care approach
- technical assistance to developing countries with regard to the funding and development of community-based rehabilitation programmes
- research on innovative approaches to the integrated care of people with mental disorders
- definition of standards, benchmarks and quality improvement tools in relation to community care.

As can be seen, the WAPR is at the same time a scientific society, a multi-disciplinary professional organisation and an advocacy group. It will celebrate its twentieth birthday at its ninth congress, to be held in Athens in October 2006. We will welcome everybody interested in fighting the disability related to mental disorders and raising the quality of life of people with mental illnesses.

Psychosocial rehabilitation implies both improving individuals' competencies and introducing environmental changes in order to improve their quality of life.

NEWS, NOTES, FORTHCOMING INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

News and notes

For contributions to this column, please contact Brian Martindale FRCPsych, Psychotherapy Department, John Conolly Wing, West London Mental Health NHS Trust, Uxbridge Road, Hanwell UB1 3EU, UK, email brian.martindale@wlmht.nhs.uk

2004 College Annual Meeting

This meeting in Harrogate should be a special attraction to our international members. As well as the important overall focus on 'Caring for Carers', there will be our now 'traditional' full-day stream organised by the Board of International Affairs involving presentations from the College International Groups. See www.rcpsych.ac.uk/2004.

The 12th Congress of the Association of European Psychiatrists (AEP)

14–18 April 2004, Geneva

A very attractive scientific programme will include:

- *Interactive main sessions*, on challenging issues directly relevant to the identity and future of European psychiatry (conflicts of interests; the role of psychodynamic psychotherapy in training and practice; community

psychiatry – myth or reality?). Experts with opposing views will debate and the audience can vote

- *Meet-the-expert sessions*, in which leading European psychiatrists will interact, especially with younger psychiatrists
- *High-quality symposia* on many contemporary European research and clinical issues
- *Continuing medical education courses*
- *Poster sessions*
- *Workshops* debating ongoing research

The Congress website, for further information, is www.kenes.com/aep2004.

Launch of South Asian Overseas Group in Sri Lanka

The South Asian Overseas Group (SAOG) was launched on 19 August 2003, during an International Conference

Two pilot placements in Sri Lanka are now available for 2004 in the RCPsych/VSO Fellowship scheme.

on Psychiatry, organised by the UK Chapter of the South Asian Forum on Mental Health and Psychiatry. The countries involved in the SAOG are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia and Singapore.

Professor Ghodse, Director of International Affairs at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, chaired the session. Dr Shooter (President), Professor Bhugra (Dean) and Dr Mahadeshwar also represented the College. Dr Shooter described the changing role of the College and hoped the Overseas Groups would develop identities of their own. He invited the International Groups to be innovative and progressive. Dr Mahadeshwar gave the background to the development of this Group and the perspective of the College's Board of International Affairs.

Questions from the floor related to Fellowships, international recruitment and affiliateships. Professor Ghodse advised that these issues would need to be taken up by the SAOG through appropriate College channels. Dr Patel stressed the need to involve the local psychiatric associations and South Asian psychiatrists in the UK.

Dr Patel convened an election of a Chairman for the SAOG and E. K. Rodrigo, President of the Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists, was unanimously elected for one year in the first instance (because within this period it is anticipated that International Groups would become Divisions in the College). A shadow Executive Committee was formed with members from different countries in South Asia. Our special thanks to Professor R. Mohan and Dr A. Javed for organising the Royal College session.

The next meeting of the SAOG will be on 17–20 September 2004 in Lahore.

Dr Shridhar Mahadeshwar

The EU and mental health

Mental health is increasingly on the agenda of the European Union (EU). One way of finding out where interest is currently focused is to access the EU health website and search for mental health publications. Within a short time, learned articles were found on such diverse areas as promoting mental health in children aged up to 6 years, a similar one on adolescents and young people, indicators for monitoring mental health in Europe, and future mental health challenges in Europe. The website is http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index_en.htm.

The Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry

The Faculty celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. It has much to be proud of. It has made a unique contribution in the UK to better diagnosis, treatment and care of older people with mental illness, to training and to research, so that the UK is pre-eminent in this field. It now seems timely to consider how we can help, through teaching and service, in developing countries, where, in sharp contrast, there are few or no specialist services. To this end there will be a workshop on this subject at the next residential meeting of the Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry in Liverpool, on 4–5 March 2004. Please email norigraham@aol.com if you are interested in contributing or participating.

Royal College of Psychiatrists and VSO Fellowships

These one-year accredited RCPsych/VSO Fellowships are a new venture offering unique and rewarding experiences for UK-enrolled specialist psychiatry registrars and will be recognised as part of the CCST programme (see *International Psychiatry*, issue 1, July 2003, p. 21). Two pilot placements in Sri Lanka are now available for 2004.

For more information, contact Margaret English, VSO Placement Advisor for the Health Team: tel. 020 8780 7647; email enquiry@vso.org.uk; post VSO, 317 Putney Bridge Road, London SW15 2PN, UK; www.vso.org.uk.

The scheme has been developed by the College Board of International Affairs (BIA) and is coordinated by a small sub-group. Contact jcarroll@rcpsych.ac.uk, or see the BIA website: www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/spcomm/bia.htm.

The International Society for the Psychological Treatments of Schizophrenia and Other Psychoses

The Society has a 47-year history of bringing together clinicians and researchers in this now rapidly expanding area. It recently held its 14th conference in Melbourne, Australia, which attracted nearly 600 participants. The organisation is encouraging the formation of local groups of clinicians. It is in the process of producing a book series, and has a twice yearly newsletter and a modern website. For further details email isps@isps.org or look at www.isps.org.

Recent news from the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)

- College members should place firmly in their diary the dates of the WPA World Congress in Cairo (11–15 September 2005) and be ready to submit proposals for symposia and workshops (deadline November 2004) and free communications (deadline February 2005).
- College members are directly involved with the WPA Presidential Global Child Mental Health Task Force, developing training protocols and educational material to assist in alleviating mental disorders in children. This programme includes full awareness of the impact of mental disorder in parents on their offspring.
- The Secretary for WPA Sections, Professor Christodoulou, a College Fellow, is convening an Institutional Programme on Mental Health in the Balkans.
- Regarding the alleged abuse of psychiatry in China, there is no reply as yet from the Chinese Minister of Health to a request for an independent WPA evaluation.
- *World Psychiatry* is the official journal of the WPA and is sent free of charge to all psychiatrists when WPA member societies supply their names and addresses. Current and back numbers can also be easily accessed from within the WPA website, www.wpanet.org. The journal contains a wide range of articles for psychiatrists working with all age groups. Recent topics

EU health website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index_en.htm.

cover ethics, pharmacology, psychoanalysis, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, global and cultural psychiatry, and mental health policy initiatives, as well as articles and commentaries on many other subjects.

- *Monthly WPA electronic bulletin*. All psychiatrists can obtain extensive up-to-date information about international news, publications and conferences (and much more) by signing on electronically to the monthly eBulletin of the WPA. See www.wpanet.org/sectorial/bulletin/suscript.php.

The North American Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

For more than 20 years this Group has received members and visitors at the annual meetings of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and this tradition will continue in 2004 in New York City, probably on 2 May (see Forthcoming international events). The 2003 meeting in San Francisco was fun, with good food, drink, company and brief, lively speeches by Mike Shooter, Robin Murray and Paul Jessop. Our activities now include scientific

presentations at both the APA and College meetings. Our topics in the USA have ranged from risk factors in schizophrenia and the history of schizophrenia, to war, terrorism and refugees, with experts from several countries and cultures, sometimes speaking to overflowing audiences. Topics at the College meetings have included 'Hot topics in American psychiatry', 'Suicide in the elderly and physician-assisted suicide', 'Lessons learned in disaster psychiatry for children after 9/11 in New York' and 'What happened to the severely mentally ill after deinstitutionalisation'.

For the 2004 APA meeting symposium we have submitted proposals on 'The provision of psychiatric services where there is a shortage of psychiatrists', with speakers from five countries, and a workshop entitled 'Psychiatry in Afghanistan and Afghan refugees'.

For the College's 2004 annual meeting in Harrogate there will be a session on 'Serving the underserved in the US' (the elderly, children and those with severe mental illnesses).

All these events have been organised and chaired by the chair of the Group, Nigel Bark.

Forthcoming international events

15 January 2004

Conference on Religious Psychopathology

Foundation for Psychiatry and Religion in collaboration with the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry. Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Contact: Dr Herman M. Van Praag.
Email: h.m.van.praag@vanpraag.com.

29 January–2 February 2004

International Conference on Schizophrenia

WPA co-sponsored conference. Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) in collaboration with the WHO. Chennai (Old Madras), India.

Contact: Dr R. Thara.
Email: scarf@vsnl.com.
Website: www.scarfindia.org.

1–28 February 2004

Fifth Virtual Congress of Psychiatry (Interpsiquis 2004)

Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

Contact: Dr Pedro Moreno.
Email: secretaria@psiquiatria.com.
Website: www.interpsiquis.com/2004/participation.html.

12–14 February 2004

Bienestar y Calidad de Vida en el Siglo XXI

WPA Section on Mass Media and Mental Health, with Havana Psychiatric Hospital. Havana, Cuba.

Contact: Dr Miguel A. Materazzi.
Email: materazzi@arnet.com.ar.

5–10 March 2004

Second Biennial Conference of the International Society for Affective Disorders (ISAD)

WPA co-sponsored conference. In collaboration with the WPA Section on Affective Disorders. Cancun, Mexico.

Contact: David Beck.
Email: d.k.beck@soton.ac.uk.
Website: www.isad.org.uk.

17–20 March 2004

Second World Congress on Women's Mental Health

WPA Section on Women's Mental Health and the WPA Section on Interdisciplinary Collaboration. Washington, DC, USA.

Contact: Dr Donna Stewart; Dr Uriel Halbreich.
Email: donna.stewart@uhn.on.ca; urielh@acsu.buffalo.edu.
Website: www.womenmentalhealth.com.

17–20 March 2004

National Association of Dually Diagnosed. International Congress – V

In collaboration with the WPA Section on Mental Retardation. Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

Contact: Dr L. Salvador Carulla.
Email: I.Salvador@telefonica.net.

23–25 March 2004

First International Conference on Psychiatry, Law and Ethics

WPA Section on Psychiatry, Law and Ethics in collaboration with UNESCO, WAML, ICLE and SMLI. Eilat, Israel.

Email: seminars@isas.co.il.
Website: www.isas.co.il/psychiatrylaw2004.

29 March–2 April 2004

Congreso Panamericano de Salud Mental Infanto-Juvenil

Organised by Cuban Society of Psychiatry in collaboration with the WHO and the Latin American Psychiatric Association. Palacio de Convenciones, Havana, Cuba.

Contact: Dr Cristobal Martinez Gomez.
Email: crisma@informed.sld.cu.
Website: www.sld.cu/eventos/psiquiatria/felices;
www.loseventos.cu/saludmental2004.

14–18 April 2004

European Psychiatry: Evidence and Experience. 12th AEP Congress

Geneva, Switzerland.

Call for abstracts ends 30 October 2003.
Email: aep12@kenes.com.
Website: www.kenes.com/aep2004.