

For contributions to this column, please contact Brian Martindale FRCPsych, Early Intervention in Psychosis Service, South Tyne and Wearside NHS Mental Health Trust, Monkwearmouth Hospital, Newcastle Road, Sunderland SR5 1NB, UK, email Brian.Martindale@stw.nhs.uk

WHO atlas interactive website: http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/. Hard copy can be ordered from the WHO (email bookorders@who.int) quoting reference number 11500632

Council of Europe draft resolution available at <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta05/ERES1460.htm>

The WHO mental health atlas, 2005

The World Health Organization (WHO) has updated its mental health atlas, which contains important information for mental health planning around the world, especially for low- and middle-income countries. It contains a global overview as well as country-by-country surveys, covering 16 themes such as: the state of mental health policy, legislation and financing, mental health facilities, numbers of psychiatric beds and professionals, programmes for special populations, and the availability of therapeutic drugs and other treatment modalities. It also has vital information on the epidemiology of mental disorders for all low- and middle-income countries.

The European Commission

The European Commission is becoming increasingly active in the mental health field. For example, it has agreed to co-finance a trans-national exchange project, led by Mental Health Europe, with the aim of demonstrating the link between mental health problems and social exclusion. The project will focus in particular on existing best practices that can contribute to tackling the inequalities that people with mental health problems encounter in access to health, employment and education and training services, as well in the protection of their civil and human rights. Through trans-national exchange and comparison of effective practices, policy proposals to achieve social inclusion will be prepared.

The Council of Europe has produced Draft Resolution 1460 (2005), 'Improving the response to mental health needs in Europe', and is hoping national governments will bring into practice the items pointed out under article 16.

The College response to the earthquake in Pakistan

Immediately after the earthquake disaster in South Asia, Professor Sheila Hollins (College President) and Professor Hamid Ghodse (Chair of the Board of International Affairs) set up a task force to streamline support for colleagues affected by the disaster and wrote to the chair of the South Asian Division and the Pakistan Federal Health Minister offering assistance for trauma-related services. The College has also invited the British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association and the British Indian Psychiatric Association to inform their members of the College's Volunteer Programme so

that we have information about those experts willing to offer assistance with mental health relief efforts. All interested persons are requested to send their details to the College (c/o Joanna Carroll). The College has also initiated training events for professionals going to earthquake areas and these workshops are planned for the spring.

The Board of International Affairs will be represented by Dr Afzal Javed at the national workshop on disaster management in Lahore. This meeting will address future psychosocial rehabilitation plans for the survivors.

Psychiatry, Iraq and the College

The Iraqi Sub-Committee (ISC) of the Board of International Affairs (BIA), chaired by Dr Majid Al-Yassiri, held its inaugural meeting on 21 November 2005. The ISC will inform and advise the BIA on matters related to mental health services in Iraq that the College will be able to support. The draft terms of reference and action plan were subsequently agreed by the BIA. The ISC will:

- support (as part of the College Volunteer Programme) psychiatrists wishing to have sabbatical leave from their mental health trusts to volunteer their expertise to develop mental health in Iraq
- facilitate training in the UK for Iraqi trainees through the College's Consultant Assisted Sponsorship Scheme
- fund (jointly with other organisations) the development of a multidisciplinary teaching tool kit
- make College journals available online, free of charge, to psychiatrists practising in Iraq
- support five Iraqi researchers to present posters at the 2006 College annual meeting
- support the Iraqi Psychiatric Association to develop as a democratic and representative professional organisation.

The College Council noted that this could be a model for similar area-focused committees. For details on the ISC and how you can help please email Majid.Al-Yassiri@swlstg-tr.nhs.uk.

Africa Mental Health Foundation

The Africa Mental Health Foundation was recently founded. It is dedicated to research, evidence-based policy and practice, and the promotion of mental and neurological health and healthy behaviour. It welcomes collaborative research partnerships. Its website is <http://mentalhealthafrica.com>

The Jean Delay Prize

The Jean Delay Prize is the most prestigious award of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) – indeed, it is regarded as the Nobel Prize in psychiatry. It is named after Jean Delay, who was the President of the first World Congress of Psychiatry (Paris, 1950) and the first President of the WPA. It is awarded to any individual who has made a major contribution to the biological, psychological or social aspects of our discipline, or who has built bridges between these domains. The prize consists of a diploma, a medal, and a donation of €40 000, and the recipient delivers a plenary lecture at the World Congress of Psychiatry.

Professor Steinfeldt-Foss of Norway is the third recipient of the prize. He was chosen by the jury as the candidate best representing the spirit of Professor Jean Delay, having dedicated his entire career to understanding and improving the dignity and human rights of patients with mental disorders. This information is taken from the WPA website (<http://www.wpanet.org>), from which the plenary lecture by Professor Steinfeldt-Foss, 'Patient and human rights in light of biopsychosocial developments in psychiatry', can be accessed.

Specialist registrars can do placements abroad

Two excellent reports have recently been received – one by a specialist registrar (SpR) who was given 3 months' sabbatical to work in tsunami-affected areas and the other by a colleague working in Malawi. Both were supported by the College's Volunteer Programme. Both have provided vivid accounts of their experience (one is available online at <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/spcomm/Malawi.htm> and the other will be added soon).

The College supports trainees in 'out of programme' placements overseas. Specialist registrars (in year 2 or 3) are eligible for an overseas placement, for up to 1 year, approved by a relevant Specialist Advisory Committee (SAC). The placement should offer an affiliation or formal attachment to a university department, a hospital or the ministry of health. This is important if research or audit requires ethical or other approval, and will also ensure that relevant organisations know about the trainee's project so that it is organised to complement other national programmes.

All trainees will have an in-country mentor (usually a member or fellow of the College or an individually approved senior psychiatrist). Where possible, the College will place a consultant volunteer with the trainee in the same area, providing opportunities for mutual support, supervision and mentoring for the trainee. There will also be a UK mentor with knowledge of the placement country (usually an approved UK trainer) and contact should be maintained and progress monitored. Trainees will be expected to

write a detailed report about an audit, research project or a clinical case study, with supervision from the UK mentor.

News from the UEMS

The Section and Board of Psychiatry of the Union of European Medical Specialists (UEMS) met in Košice, Slovakia, in October 2005. Dr Anne Lindhardt from Denmark was succeeded as President of the Section by her fellow countryman Dr Torben Lindskov Hansen.

The Section has recently finalised a report outlining the competences and tasks of a contemporary European psychiatrist, aimed at other medical professionals, educators, politicians, decision-makers and the general public. Psychiatrists in Europe practise in varied settings and diverse communities. Exercising professional standards, making ethical judgements and being aware of the need for tolerance are all fundamental. Multilingual societies, immigration and the rapid cultural change that follows require psychiatrists to demonstrate an understanding of this cultural diversity and a commitment to personal equality. Sufficient skills and knowledge are required to work within diverse and complex structures as an administrator and as a leader. Psychiatrists have a duty to oppose abuse of psychiatry for the purpose of excessive social control or political repression. Out of the process of European harmonisation, a sense of common European professional identity is gradually emerging.

World Psychiatric Association International Congress

It will be a great honour for the psychiatric community of Turkey to welcome psychiatrists and mental health workers to Istanbul for the WPA's International Congress on 12–16 July 2006. With its rich cultural heritage and bridging of continents and cultures, Istanbul is a perfect place for developing new collegial alliances and exploring new scientific possibilities in our field.

Harmonising the universal scientific knowledge and the uniqueness of care for every human being is a challenge for psychiatry, both in theory and in practice. Under the general theme 'Psychiatry: Uniqueness and Universality', this congress will cover scientific studies on every theoretical and practical aspect of psychiatry and mental health. Studies covering fields such as neurology, psychology, general medicine, sociology, philosophy and anthropology are also welcomed.

Along with a high-quality scientific content, the Bosphorus will also host a rich social and cultural programme.

Psychiatrists of the world are invited to meet where the continents meet.

*Levent Küey, Associate Professor of Psychiatry
Chairperson, Organising Committee*

The full text of the UEMS report can be found at <http://www.uemspsihchiatry.org/section/reports/2005Oct-PsychiatristProfile.pdf>

Details of the trainee schemes can be found at <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/spcomm/bia/senior.htm>