

College signs a memorandum of understanding with Kurdistan

A ceremony for the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the College and the Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan took place at the College headquarters on 6 December 2007. Professor Sheila Hollins, College President, signed on behalf of the College, while on the Iraqi side there were two signatories: Dr Khidir Ma'soom, President of the University of Koya, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Dr Abdulla Al-Mousawi, Cultural Attaché, Iraqi Embassy, London. The ceremony was attended by a number of College officers and members of the College Board of International Affairs. The signing was followed by short speeches given by Dr Majid Al-Yassiri, Chair of the Iraqi Subcommittee, Professor Hollins and the two Iraqi guests. The proceedings were filmed by a television crew from Kurdistan and this has since been broadcast locally.

This was the first memorandum of understanding ever to be signed at the College headquarters. The event is an indicator of the two parties' commitment to improving mental health services in Iraq.

*Dr Riadh Abed
Iraqi Subcommittee*

College at the APA meeting

The 2008 annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) will be held in Washington, DC, 3–8 May. The Pan-American Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists has the pleasure to invite all College members to an international reception, to be held immediately after the Convocation, on Monday 5 May, 6.30–8.30 p.m. in the Russell/Hart Rooms at the JW Marriott Hotel, 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue. Please come and meet the officers of the College and of the APA, bring friends of the College and anyone you know who may be interested in joining the College as an International Associate. It will be an entertaining evening and a great opportunity to meet friends and colleagues from around the world.

There will also be two scientific symposia with College input – 'Poverty and Mental Illness Around the World', organised by the Pan-American Division, and a joint Presidential symposium co-chaired by the Presidents of the APA and the College, 'Advocating with One Voice for Mental Healthcare in the US and UK'.

VSO opportunities in Malawi

International development charity VSO is urgently calling for advanced trainee or consultant psychiatrists to support psychiatric care in Malawi. VSO has 6-month opportunities starting in June and September 2008, and February 2009, to provide a programme requested by Zomba Mental Hospital. The roles involve teaching, training, service development and policy advice. Find out more at <http://www.vso.org.uk/volunteering/assignments/healthcare/psychiatrist-malawi.asp>.

UEMS 1958–2008

For the 50th anniversary of the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS), a series of celebrations will be organised in Brussels. The 3-day event will combine the usual meetings of the UEMS's constituent bodies with a major scientific conference. Printed publications on the UEMS's history and achievements will be issued. This will be an opportunity for the UEMS constituencies to advertise their fields of interest and activities to a wide European audience.

Zlatko Fras,¹ Bernard Mailet² and Frédéric Destrebecq³

¹UEMS President; ²UEMS Secretary-General;

³UEMS Chief Executive Officer

WPA position on the role of psychiatrists in executions

The Standing Committees on Ethics and on Review of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) would like to bring attention to the unequivocal position of the WPA regarding the participation of psychiatrists in executions. Where psychiatrists may be asked to participate (e.g. in the provision of a psychiatric opinion on 'fitness for execution'), it is necessary to state to all parties involved that such practices are against the ethical principles of the WPA. These principles are explicitly stated in the Madrid Declaration on Ethical Standards for Psychiatric Practice and its Additional Specific Guidelines (1996) as follows: 'Under no circumstances should psychiatrists participate in legally authorized executions nor participate in assessments of competency to be executed'. The Declaration was adopted by all member societies during the 1996 WPA General Assembly and adopting the Declaration is an obligation of every new society applying to join the WPA.

It would be highly desirable to convey to the judicial authorities of your country the position of the WPA.

Professor George Christodoulou¹ and

Professor Driss Moussaoui²

¹WPA Standing Committee on Ethics;

²WPA Standing Committee on Review

Indian Journal of Psychiatry

The *Indian Journal of Psychiatry (IJP)* celebrates its golden jubilee in 2008. There are plans to bring out a special commemorative volume and a special issue of past presidential addresses and editorials. A special exhibition on *IJP* at ANCIPS in Kolkata will also be arranged this year. If any readers of *International Psychiatry* have photographs related to the launching of the journal, subsequent developments, group photographs and so on, please contact the Editor (editor@indianjpsychiatry.org). We would also welcome articles. Of particular interest to us would be details of *IJP* between 1947 and 1956, including copies of the journal under its former name, *Journal of Psychiatry and Neurology*.

Dr T. S. Sathyanarayana Rao

Chief Editorial Advisor, IJP