

new teaching techniques will be compared with the older methods through a randomised controlled study.

Contact details: Subodh.dave@derbyshcft.nhs.uk

### 2011 BPPA/BAPA conference, 'State of the Art Psychopharmacology'

The 10th annual British Pakistani Psychiatric Association (BPPA) conference was held with the British Arab Psychiatric Association (BAPA) on 19 and 20 November 2011 in Solihull, UK. Key-note addresses were provided by a variety of academic and clinical experts, including: Dr Fiona Gaughran, Dr Gordon Bates, Professor Chitra Mohan, Professor Malcolm Larder, Dr Peter Haddad and Dr Claire Royston. Topics covered included psychopharmacology across the breadth of psychiatric specialties. Conference attendees also benefited from an address by Professor Sue Bailey, the President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, on her vision for the future. The key message from the conference was the need to use medications based upon the risk/benefit ratio, taking into account the ever-evolving evidence base.

The 11th BPPA conference, in 2012, has provisionally been set for 17–18 November 2012. For further information on the BPPA, please visit <http://www.bppauk.org> or email [bppa@btinternet.com](mailto:bppa@btinternet.com)

### Global Health Alerts: Why mental health matters to global health

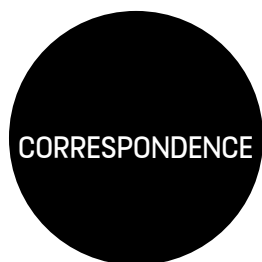
Friday 9 March 2012, from 6.30 p.m., at the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM), 1 Wimpole Street, London W1G 0AE

The Global Health Alerts is a series of free evening events organised by and held at the RSM. This series of talks aims to allow RSM members and non-members to engage in global health and learn about its past, current and future challenges. Well-respected speakers or organisations are invited to address controversial issues.

Professor Vikram Patel will address arguably the most neglected and stigmatised of all the causes of human suffering around the globe. The lecture will demonstrate not only why addressing health conditions affecting the brain is central to global health and development, but also that things are now beginning to change for the better and there are clear directions in which we need to be going.

Vikram Patel is Professor of International Mental Health and Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow in Clinical Science at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where he is joint director of the School's Centre for Global Mental Health.

Following a chaired discussion, delegates will be invited to a networking reception.



Correspondence should be sent to [ip@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:ip@rcpsych.ac.uk)

### Religious and spiritual dimensions of healthcare

**Sir:** John Cox challenges readers of *International Psychiatry*, the academic community, policy planners at the World Health Organization and national governments 'to fill in these glaring conceptual and practical gaps in research, education and clinical work – and to reconsider the religious and spiritual dimensions of healthcare' (Cox, 2011). This may seem daunting, but it is worth noting that much groundwork has already been done, for example in the work and publications of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group (SIG). There are examples in Cook *et al* (2009), and in numerous other publications to be found on the College's SIG web pages (<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/specialinterestgroups/spirituality.aspx>).

I would also humbly draw your attention to a recent account of a comprehensive 'psycho-spiritual' paradigm, *The Psychology of Spirituality* (Culliford, 2011). Based in part on the work of James Fowler (1981), this book seeks to shed light on human existence and development at personal, interpersonal, sociocultural and spiritual levels. The paradigm described could readily be adapted for both research and teaching (Culliford, 2009).

Its relevance to medicine and psychiatry is that a key element of the new, holistic paradigm concerns the potential for people to grow through adversity and it reasserts the value of healing (making

people whole), as distinct from simply removing or suppressing symptoms.

As well as informing clinical work, the paradigm also points meaningfully towards the benefits of sharing people's suffering and attempting (whether successfully or not) to restore them to health. It offers something of an explanation, then, of the vocational aspects of becoming a healthcare professional, and suggests ways of developing skills to enhance professional competence.

These may be thought of as 'spiritual' skills (including, for example, developing emotional resilience, having the courage to witness and endure distress while sustaining an attitude of hope), and they are by no means bounded by the work setting, some of them being of equal value in the family environment and in everyday life.

#### Larry Culliford

Former Consultant Psychiatrist, Sussex Partnership NHS Trust – retired 2007, email [auud26@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:auud26@dsl.pipex.com)

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Cox, J. (2011) Introduction: faith and psychiatry. *International Psychiatry*, 8, 57.

Culliford, L. (2009) Teaching spirituality and health care to 3rd year medical students. *Clinical Teacher*, 6, 22–27.

Culliford, L. (2011) *The Psychology of Spirituality: An Introduction*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Fowler, J. (1981) *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. Harper.