

of older siblings leaving school early and marrying early. It is, though, important not to assume that forced marriage is an issue simply on the basis that a student presents with any of the above problems.

The education and health authorities should be trained to identify and respond to victims' needs at an early stage, by not only offering practical advice and referral to counselling services or support groups but also, if required, referral to social services. Social services will often play a key role in protecting the interests of the young person and have a duty to make enquiries into allegations of abuse or neglect against a child (under section 47 of the Children Act 1989). They can also provide information about their rights and choices and refer young people, with their consent, to appropriate local and national support groups or counselling services; they can also encourage access to advocacy services (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2004).

Health professionals should be aware of the impact of forced marriage. General practitioners should be aware of the issues regarding forced marriage and especially of the need to keep the information confidential from the victim's parents (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2004).

## Role of mental health services

The author recommends that primary care and psychiatric services should be geared up to identify this particular issue and appropriate guidelines should be laid down to tackle it. It is important to treat the various mental health disorders

secondary to the stress of forced marriage and ensure victims' safety. There should be provision for the mental health team to be able to liaise with the specialised transcultural team for the Black and minority ethnic population so as to be able to understand the culture and give emotional support. This team should be able to provide psychological support. Mental health workers should be made aware of the issue of forced marriage, especially when dealing with young adolescents. In complex cases, there should be appropriate liaison between the police, social services and the forced marriage unit. The development and implementation of strategies to address forced marriage must be underpinned by an understanding of the practice as constituting a breach of fundamental human rights and possibly demanding legal action, rather than a view that it is no more than a 'family affair'.

## References

- Forced Marriage Unit (2006) *Forced Marriage: A Wrong Not A Right*. Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2004) *Young People and Vulnerable Adults Facing Forced Marriage: Practice Guidelines for Social Workers*. FCO.
- Home Office Working Group on Forced Marriage (2000) *A Choice by Right*. Home Office.
- Raleigh, V. S. & Balarajan, R. (1992) Suicide and self-burning among Indians and West Indians in England and Wales. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **161**, 365–368.
- Southall Black Sisters (2001) *Forced Marriage: An Abuse of Human Rights One Year After 'A Choice by Right'*. Southall Black Sisters.

## NEWS AND NOTES

For contributions to the 'News and notes' column, please email [ip@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:ip@rcpsych.ac.uk)

## Pan-American Division Newsletter

This year's symposium, 'Women and Psychiatry Around the World: The Importance of Gender and Culture', at the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in San Diego, was very successful. The speakers were from Pakistan (Haroon Chaudhry), Kenya (Frank Njenga), Egypt (Nasser Loza), Trinidad (Gerard Hutchinson), Mexico (Asuncion Lara) and Australia (Jayashri Kulkarni), and Sheila Hollins, President of the College, was the discussant.

The liveliness and fun of the reception hosted by the Pan-American Division/Royal College of Psychiatrists at the Omni Hotel was not affected by San Diego's untimely cold misty weather, even though it was partly on an outside balcony. The President and nearly all the other officers of the College and several of the staff were there and there was a large contingent of APA officers, including the President, President elect and several past Presidents, and many officers and members of the APA Assembly.

The Pan-American Division put on an excellent session at the College annual meeting in Edinburgh, organised and

chaired by our financial officer, Simon Brooks. Stephen Kisely from Nova Scotia spoke on community treatment orders and Sue Bailey, from the Adolescent Forensic Service, Manchester, England, on the ethics of detaining child patients.

Independently of the Pan-American Division, the College and APA have been working closely together. There was a joint Presidential symposium, 'Health Inequalities for Persons with Mental Health Problems and Developmental Disabilities', at the APA meeting. Professor Hollins spoke to the Assembly and to the Board of Trustees of the APA. There was a joint business meeting and one of the topics pursued was a joint programme to provide training and consultation by volunteer psychiatrists to other countries covered by the Pan-American Division. There were also two joint sessions at the College annual meeting in Edinburgh: 'Recovery and Its Meaning for Minority Groups', covering disparities in mental healthcare in the US and UK, and 'Recovery and Intellectual Disabilities'.

There was a very small attendance at the executive meeting in San Diego but the generous offer of support for someone from the Caribbean or Central or South America to attend the APA is still open. Contact Dr Bark for further details.

The Secretary of the Pan-American Division, due to present at the APA in San Diego, was unable to attend because the US embassy did not grant him an entry visa. They maintain they issue only a certain number of visas every year for meetings and this year the allocation had been met. Others from 'developing countries' have experienced similar problems. It is hard to see how this could help 'homeland security' – rather the opposite. Please contact Dr Bark with your experiences, views and recommendations for the appropriate response of the Division.

Dr Nigel Bark

Chair of the Pan-American Division (email nbark1@pol.net)

### Books wanted for review

It is intended that *International Psychiatry* will feature reviews of books published in low- and middle-income countries. Authors of books broadly on the topic of mental healthcare are invited to contact the Editor, Hamid Ghodse, email hghodse@sgul.ac.uk.

## Scotland Malawi Psychiatry Project

The Scotland Malawi Psychiatry Project (SMPP) is a collaboration that supports mental health training in Malawi while providing experience in international/cross-cultural psychiatry for UK trainee and senior psychiatrists. Malawi is a sub-Saharan country with one qualified psychiatrist for a population of 12 million. In early 2007, five volunteers worked with colleagues from the College of Medicine, Malawi, to provide undergraduate teaching to 60 students. SMPP plans to build on this successful experience by sending eight psychiatrists to support an expanded medical student teaching programme in 2008 (and future years). Placements are for 3–6 weeks and are based at Malawi's main government hospital in Zomba. The project is supported by the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Volunteer Scheme. If you are interested in volunteering, or would like to support the project financially, please contact Leonie Boeing (email lwboeing@googlemail.com) or Robert Stewart (email robcstewart@mac.com).

## Corrigendum

The 'Report on current themes in child and adolescent psychiatry', in the News and Notes section of the July issue of *International Psychiatry* (p. 76), was contributed by Dr Sheela Biswas, Consultant Psychiatrist, Child and Adolescent Unit, New Street Health Centre, Barnsley.

## African Journal of Psychiatry

The *African Journal of Psychiatry* (formerly known as the *South African Psychiatry Review*) launched its first issue in August this year. The journal is affiliated to *International Psychiatry* and it is hoped this will stimulate exchange of news and knowledge and be of benefit to readers globally. Please contact Dr Christopher Szabo, Editor-in-Chief, for further details (email Christopher.Szabo@wits.ac.za).

## The BPPA Young Researcher of the Year Award

The British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association (BPPA) recently announced the BPPA Young Researcher of the Year Award. Its aim is to promote interest in psychiatric research among young Pakistani health professionals and to recognise research published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The award is not restricted to any particular psychiatric subspecialty and work carried out in any field will be considered. There are two awards each year, one for research carried out in Pakistan and the other for research carried out in the UK and Ireland. The winners and runner-up in both categories will be entitled to cash rewards equivalent of £250 and £150 respectively. For further information visit the BPPA website (<http://www.bppauk.org/bppayoungresearcher.htm>).

### CORRESPONDENCE

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## Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society

**Sir:** The article by Khan (July 2006, p. 21) and letter by Abbasi (January 2007, p. 25) in *International Psychiatry* unfortunately tend to overlook many positive aspects of mental healthcare and services in Pakistan. Some of their views seem to relate more specifically to experience in the private healthcare system or are based on a distant view and very little information about the current situation. Both seem to be genuine attempts to

highlight the inadequacies in the system, but these are well known.

The statement in the letter by Abbasi about the *Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (JPPS)* is an example of this and is factually incorrect. I would like to point out that *JPPS* is in regular publication and it is incorrect to say that the journal has not been produced since 2003. It restarted publication in 2005 and two volumes have been published since then.

The *JPPS* is available free (full text) on <http://www.jpps.com.pk>. It is indexed by WHO, EMRO Index and also in a number of regional and local indexes. The journal has played an important role in the continuing professional development