



miscellany

The Health Foundation funds projects to improve the quality of patient care

The Health Foundation has awarded the Royal College of Psychiatrists £826 000 to fund two projects aimed at improving the quality of mental health services in the UK. The projects form part of The Health Foundation's £4.5 million *Engaging with Quality* initiative, which aims to encourage clinical engagement in quality improvement.

The first project looks at improving the quality of prescribing for serious mental illness in partnership with the British Association for Psychopharmacology, the College of Mental Health Pharmacists and UK Psychiatric Pharmacists Group, Rethink, the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. The group will set up a prescribing observatory to monitor prescribing from pharmacies serving acute in-patient facilities and the community. The first of two topics examined will be prescribing of high doses and polypharmacy of anti-psychotic drugs to in-patients and will compare current practice with best

practice as outlined in national clinical guidelines. The second topic will examine safe prescribing of antipsychotic drugs to out-patients compared with NICE guidelines.

Using the results, the project team will be able to rapidly feedback to lead clinicians within trusts and local patient organisations to encourage changes to prescribing towards national clinical guidelines. Interventions to support improvement may include, for example, improving the quality of educational materials available for patients.

The second project focuses on improving the quality of care for patients who self-harm. Using audit and peer review processes, the project will examine the management of self-harm in acute and general hospitals and mental health services compared with NICE guidelines. Patient representatives will be members of the local groups and visiting teams being set up under the project. As with the prescribing project, the results will be made available to participating clinicians and organisations as a stimulus to quality improvement. In addition, regional collaborations will be set up to educate and train individuals and organisations in

quality improvement. These collaborations will help to ensure that improvements are spread geographically and sustained over time.

The Health Foundation's *Engaging with Quality* initiative responds to the work of Sheila Leatherman *et al* in *The Quest for Quality*, which identified clinical engagement as a prerequisite for quality improvement. The Health Foundation consulted widely and found that clinicians are not fully engaged in the quality agenda, and many do not have the skills required to bring about improvements. *Engaging with Quality* is specifically designed to support quality improvement projects run by professional bodies including Royal Colleges, specialist societies and associations.

'Such an approach was chosen as professional bodies have the natural legitimacy and authority to command clinicians' respect and hence are uniquely placed to encourage clinical support for quality improvement', says Wendy Buckley, Assistant Director at The Health Foundation.

For further information about *Engaging with Quality* and the projects being funded, visit www.health.org.uk.

forthcoming events

The Royal Society of Medicine are the organisers of **Children with special needs: coordinating education, health and social care**. This 1-day conference will take place on Tuesday 24 May 2005 at Southmead Centre for Medical Education, Bristol. Topics will include: the infant and young child and their problems; young offenders – a further cause for concern; the real world of the classroom; the importance of therapists; the multi-agency approach and model; the parent as the expert – self-efficacy approaches and the impact of the Hall Report. For further information please contact Anke Muller, Academic Department, Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1G 0AE (tel: 020 7290 2980; e-mail: anke.muller@rsm.ac.uk).

University College London (UCL) would like to announce the **MSc in Culture and Health**. The course is run jointly by The Centre for Behavioural and Social Sciences in Medicine and The Department of Anthropology, UCL. The aim of the MSc is

to provide, through a coherent course of study, an advanced education in the concepts and theory of transcultural medicine, particularly in relation to Britain and Europe, along with methods and techniques required for research in this area. Besides the understanding it offers of health issues, a primary focus of the MSc is research in other cultures and with minority groups in Britain and abroad. Students can choose to study either physical health or mental health. Applicants must have, or be likely to obtain, a good honours degree in medicine, psychology, anthropology, counselling, or related area (first or upper second), or a recognised professional qualification in social work, nursing, occupational therapy or their equivalent. For a prospectus and application form please contact the Course Administrator, MSc in Culture and Health, The Centre for Behavioural and Social Sciences in Medicine, UCL, 2nd Floor, Wolfson Building, 48 Riding House Street, London W1W 7EY (tel: 020 7679 9478; fax: 020 7679 9426; e-mail: p.salmon@kcl.ac.uk). For further academic information please contact Dr Simon Dein

(tel: 020 7679 9479; e-mail: s.dein@ucl.ac.uk).

The next **Congress of the European Academy of Childhood Disability (EACD)** will be held in Monaco on 19–22 November 2005. It will be a crucial event for professionals in all aspects of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of handicaps. It will also be a unique opportunity for multidisciplinary exchanges between physicians involved in medicine of handicapped persons, speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, psychomotor therapists, research scholars and public health specialists. New methods, research reports, advanced teaching sessions and multidisciplinary exchanges are the main focus of the sessions. Through plenary sessions and satellite symposia, associations of parents and patients, and associations of nurses and social workers will be other very important partners of this event for the care of handicapped children. Detailed information concerning this congress is available at the following website: <http://www.eacd2005.org>.