

# PSYCHE AND SPIRIT: connecting psychiatry and spirituality

Newsletter of the Section on Religion, Spirituality & Psychiatry Vol. 5 Issue 1 August 2016

Editorial Board: Nahla Nagy, Simon Dein, and Peter J. Verhagen

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WORLD PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

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represents a subcontinent and a way of thinking which happens to be a meaningful contribution to cultural sensitivity and spirituality.

We all remember the report on the 1<sup>st</sup> Global meeting on Spirituality and Mental Health (Brazil, Psyche & Spirit 4 (2), 2015), and a year later we are looking forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global meeting in Cape Town, next November. You will find an extensive program organized by the section, including intersectional activities. Of course special attention will be paid to the Position Statement on Spirituality and Religion in Psychiatry, published in *World Psychiatry* (15/1/87-88). I would like to draw your attention especially to the Interfaith Round Table program, organized by Dr. Avdesh Sharma.

I would like to bring to your notice the European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health. The research institute promotes research, training and networking in the field of religion, spirituality and health, both in Switzerland and across Europe, <http://www.fig.ch/en/home>. On the website one can find a newsletter and interesting downloads (by Harold Koenig and others). Every two years an international conference is being held. You will find a report and this year's conference on page 3. The next conference will be held in 2018 in Coventry (UK).

Allow me to remind you that this newsletter is open for your contributions on our special field of interest Spirituality, Religion in Psychiatry: presentations, abstracts, research designs, teaching materials, a summary of your PhD thesis, and so on.

Peter J. Verhagen

Past chair of the Section Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry

## Editorial

Dear readers,

In this issue of the Newsletter of the WPA Section Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry you will read about activities organized by the section and about events members of the section have taken part in. First of all Dr. Avdesh Sharma introduces himself to the readers. As member of the section board he

**INTERPHASING SPIRITUALITY, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND  
MENTAL HEALTH**

Let me introduce myself along with some facts and learnings in life. I am Avdesh Sharma, 'Consultant Well Being Psychiatrist', in private practice in New Delhi, India for last about 30 yrs. I did my medicine in 1978 and the post-graduation in Psychiatry from National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India from 1980 to 1984. The training exposed me to multidisciplinary approach in Department of Neurosciences, Psychology, Social Work, Rehabilitation, Health communication etc. apart from Psychiatry. We had focus on Indian thought and philosophy as a part of the curriculum, thus kindling cultural sensitivity and spirituality as mechanisms of action and management for psychological problems as perceived by the community as well.

I have had the good fortune of having exposure to the best in the field of Neurosciences as well as 'Spiritual Sciences'. The impetus for this has been the fact that Spiritual Organizations in India and the television channels (12 television channels with 24 x 7 content being available in India catering to spiritual/religious programs) attract millions specially with 'minor/common' mental disorders. There have also been innumerable studies from established centers recently about the role of spiritual practices on health. The acceptance of religious/spiritual practices in daily living by people in India help in bringing spiritual contexts in clinical practice with the desire and consent of clients and families.

I was also the editor of: 'Spirituality and Mental Health', joint publication of Indian Psychiatric Society and Medical Wing of Raj Yoga (Spiritual organization) in 2009 with about forty mental health experts from across the world, including Prof. Dinesh Bhugra, President, WPA. It focused on scientific basis of spirituality and on the science behind spiritual practices. As a guest expert of 32 episodes, with internationally acclaimed spiritualist B.K. Shivani, half

an hour each, internationally broadcast television show 'Mind Matters' in 'Awakening with Brahmakumaris' on spirituality mental health interphase, we were able to focus on looking at these issues in a culturally sensitive, practical approaches to management of mental health issues.

I have had the privilege of learning from various schools of holistic health, spiritual sciences and meditative practices, energy healings and spiritual schools of thoughts including Rajayoga and Transcendental meditation, Reyukai (Japanese Buddhist School of Meditation), Reiki Energy Healing etc. These exposures helped in getting involved for interphasing Spirituality and health (specially mental health) through books, radio and television programs. The facilitation of interphasing mental health professionals and spiritualists internationally and within India since last 25 years through workshops and seminars has helped me carry forward these initiatives. What has struck me the most is that a substantial percentage of mental health professionals are already using or interested in the interphase of psychological and spiritual inputs in a culturally sensitive manner.

Since last about thirty years, I have also been, as an expert anchor and director of television shows, able to focus on health awareness, early intervention and stigma reduction in diverse areas like HIV, holistic health, mental health, mental sub-normalcy and psychosocial issues through different platforms like television, radio and print media for varied target audiences and for Doordarshan, (official Indian Television channel) as well as Governmental, Non-Governmental and professional organizations.

The programs listed above have been showcased at the International (World Psychiatric Association, American Psychiatric Association, Royal College of Psychiatry, SAARC Psychiatric Federation, South Asian Forum etc.) and national forums (Indian Psychiatric Society, Indian Association of Private Psychiatry, Indian Association of Social Psychiatry etc.) through workshop modules to interphase Media and Mental Health and have been very well received. The television series Mindwatch (26 episodes) and Mann

Ki Baat (Mind Matters) (78 episodes) ([www.mannkibaat.com](http://www.mannkibaat.com)) to our knowledge are the longest run non-fiction mental health series in the world to the widest possible target audience through National Television, 'Doordarshan'. This highlights the need in the population at large to receive authentic 'Public Education' content for mental health.

These learnings from public, co-professionals and professionals from other disciplines (media and spiritualists) have helped me realize that life style diseases, psychosomatic illnesses and mental health issues including negative societal trends can only be managed through promotive and preventive health. The body of work in this area also helps early health seeking behavior, leading to early intervention and stigma reduction.

When these initiatives are done through prevailing religious/spiritual sensitivities, we can provide best practices for that population for which the 'Mental Health & Spirituality/Religion section' and 'Public Education Initiatives of WPA' are deeply committed. These initiatives with available technology for widest possible reach make them cost effective, holistic, culturally sensitive and locally relevant, for reaching the unreached to provide Mental Health for All, for Life.

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Incidentally, the issue of Lancet Psychiatry of March 2016 has carried the essence in the feature 'Hidden in Plain sight: Mental Health in India'.  
[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(16\)00052-3/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(16)00052-3/abstract). The article is available free of charge.

The 5th European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health ECRSH16 took place from May 12 to 14 in Gdansk, situated in northern Poland on the Baltic Sea. The conference was organized by the Research Institute of Spirituality and Health RISH in cooperation with the Institute of Psychology of the University of Gdansk, Dr. Katarzyna Skrzypinska, Dr. hab. Piotr Krakowiak and their team. The topic of the conference was 'Religion and Spirituality in Health Care: Risk or Benefit for the Patient?' It was a great gathering of about 120 researchers and health professionals of many nations, exchanging their expertise and research.

### Scientific Programme

The scientific programme consisted of 10 keynote lectures, including a special Gdansk lecture, 7 symposia, 4 free-communication sessions and a poster exhibition. The keynote speakers pointed out topics like role and efficacy of prayer in health care; spiritual struggles and religious coping; religion, culture and migration, spirituality in geriatric and nursing care; religion and therapeutic relationship; spiritual care and its benefits and challenges. The Gdansk lecture, given by Prof. Dr Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska (Poland), provided an comprehensive overview on the migration and its consequences for health considering the role of religion. This public lecture was accompanied by professional musical performance with piano and flute. Beside the official scientific programme there was a lot of informal exchange amongst the participants strengthening and promoting the European and International network.

### Social and Cultural Programme

The local organizing committee prepared a beautiful social and cultural programme containing a guided tour through the impressive exhibition at the 'European Solidarity Center', a nice dinner with music, a trip to the Old Town of Gdansk and to the world's largest brick castle in Malbork.

## Feedbacks of Participants

Two and a half days packed with programme, personal conversations and Gdansk culture left many positive impressions. One participant wrote in his feedback form: 'I felt privileged to meet so many interesting and inspiring people and to learn so much from them, and to make so many real friends'. Another participant wrote: 'I felt very welcome in Gdansk and enjoyed the atmosphere of the conference'.

## Future Perspectives

Participants from many different countries (European and international) confirmed the need for this unique scientific and interdisciplinary platform. Therefore we are encouraged to continue this biannual conference. Several groups (countries) were ready to host our next event. As a conference committee we decided to follow the invitation of Coventry University, England (Dr. Deborah Lycett and her team).

Beside academic collaborations we think of establishing a European society promoting religion, spirituality and health research, education and clinical application in Europe (organising conferences, supporting research projects, developing guidelines and facilitating academic careers).

## Post-Conference Website

You can find abstracts, slides, video and audio recordings, the complete conference folder and also pictures of the conference on: [www.ecrsh.eu](http://www.ecrsh.eu). So please check back. For the Newsletter see at: [http://www.rish.ch/application/files/9514/7405/8759/Newsletter\\_2016\\_2\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.rish.ch/application/files/9514/7405/8759/Newsletter_2016_2_-_final.pdf)

## René Hefti, MD and Oliver Merz, DTh

International Organising Committee ECRSH 2016



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Meeting on Spirituality and Mental Health



**PSYCHIATRY:**  
**INTEGRATIVE CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY**  
World Psychiatric Association  
International Congress  
Cape Town 2016, 18-22 November

The **South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP)** is co-hosting of a **World Psychiatric Association International Congress** during November 2016 in Cape Town. The congress will be held at the **Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC)** from **the 18th to 22th November 2016**, with the two congress presidents - the WPA's President, Prof Dinesh Bhugra, and the President of the SASOP, Dr Mvuyiso Talatala.



At this stage the call for abstracts has been closed with more than 800 abstracts and symposium proposals which had to be reviewed by Scientific Committee. The final program will be made available soon.

This major meeting will take place next November, in South Africa, Cape Town, during the WPA International Congress with participants from all over the world. It will present special tracks on spirituality and mental health organized by the by the WPA Section on Spirituality, Religion and Psychiatry, and in collaboration with the WPA Section Transcultural Psychiatry.

### ABOUT THE CONGRESS

With the death of Nelson Mandela in December 2013, there was a fairly general realization in South Africa, and elsewhere, that reconciliation, transformation and integration of our communities and of our clinical practice, have not been completed or, in some instances, not even undertaken yet.

The theme of this congress will therefore be **“Psychiatry: Integrative Care for the Community”** and will explore concepts, controversies and consequences of Psychiatry’s responsibility and accountability to society in terms of its scope of practice and of what can be considered as Psychiatry’s social contract.<sup>1</sup>

The congress will consider how to integrate the developing scope of current psychiatric practice with emphasis on illness prevention, health promotion, clinical care, as well as rehabilitative interventions over the course of people’s life time. The congress will deliberate on the expanding systems required for all four dimensions of care to be integrated, including:

- Psychiatry’s core neuroscience content and evidence-base for clinical care (biological);
- established psychotherapeutic process (psychological) and

<sup>1</sup> “Transformation also includes reconciliation and creating a nation united in the rich diversity of communities previously forced apart.” Nelson Mandela. State of the Nation Address, SA Parliament; 10 February 1999.

- active social involvement (social);
- undertaken within particular cultural, religious and spiritual contexts (spiritual)

In terms of the Cultural, religious and spiritual context track, several invited speakers will present, including:

<b>Peteet John, Prof (USA)</b>	<b>IL11. Spirituality in Integrative Culturally Appropriate Clinical Psychiatric Care</b>
<b>Moreira-Almeida Alexander, Prof (Brazil)</b>	<b>IL22. Research initiatives and progress in the area of religion, spirituality and mental health</b>

In addition to several oral sessions on topics in this track, what seems to be a record amount of submissions in this track have also been received and accepted, including (not complete list):

Incorporation of Spirituality in Assessment and Training by South African Mental Health Professionals. Proposed by Bernard J van Rensburg, Sect. Rel. Spir. & Psych.	Regular Symposium
People on the Move; Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Proposed by Kees Laban, Sect. Transcult. Psych.	Sectional Symposium
Research on Religion and Spirituality in Clinical Psychiatry. Proposed by Arjan Braam, Sect. Rel. Spir. & Psych.	Sectional Symposium
WPA Position Statement on Spirituality and Religion in Psychiatry. Proposed by Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Sect. Rel. Spir. & Psych.	Sectional Symposium
Religion, Atheism, Culture and Psychiatry in A Globalised World. Proposed by Kees Laban, Sect. Transcult. Psych.	Sectional Symposium
Assessing and Measuring Spirituality. Proposed by Valerie DeMarinis, Sect. Rel. Spir. & Psych.	Sectional Symposium
Spirituality and Clinical Psychiatry. Proposed by Anahy Fagundes Dias Fonseca	Sectional Symposium
Religion and Spirituality in Training of Early Career Psychiatrists. Proposed by Nahla Nagy, Sect. Rel. Spir. & Psych.	Sectional Workshop
Jung's Approach to Spirituality and Religion. Proposed by Anahy Fagundes Dias Fonseca	Sectional Workshop

In the process of the meeting, the question of what aspects of psychiatric care and practice require further integration will be posed to member associations and delegates from the 18 different WPA Zones, as well as to the more than 65 different

Sections focusing on different interests within the WPA

Concurrent local interactive community events, such as an exhibition and music production, as well as communication forums and awareness programs are being planned in Cape Town during the congress.

On behalf of the SASOP and the WPA, we cordially invite you to actively participate in the process, and to prepare for your attendance and presentation on your specific local practice, or area of interest, at this important meeting.

Our Section secretary Bernard Janse van Rensburg is co-chair of the scientific Committee! He is also president-elect of the South African Society of Psychiatrists (2014-2016).

Website: [www.wpacapetown2016.org.za](http://www.wpacapetown2016.org.za)

### Interfaith Round Table meeting, Cape Town

WPA and Conference Secretariat has agreed to have an Interfaith Round Table meeting at the conference venue on 20<sup>th</sup> November afternoon (exact time and venue would be soon confirmed). The Interfaith community of Cape Town has also agreed to it.

There would also be a Public program on 20<sup>th</sup> November at an outside venue in which general public and press would also be invited. This would be also a joint meeting of WPA, the Cape Town Conference, Interfaith Organizations & Brahmakumaris (Spiritual organization having consultative status with United Nations), along with the Public Education Initiatives of WPA. I am coordinating both the events with various components.

Dr. Dinesh Bhugra and Dr. Bernard Janse van Rensburg along with the contact person Sister Pratiba from Brahmakumaris, South Africa (who is also coordinating with other Interfaith organizations) have been extremely proactively supportive. There is no financial burden/commitment for WPA or Conference organizers. It is just to emphasize the importance of Interphase between Spirituality/Religion and Psychiatry.

The Spirituality/Religion & Psychiatry Section of the WPA is central to the programs. I am sure it will turn out to be unique events.

Dr. Avdesh Sharma

### World view and Psychotherapy PhD thesis

#### Abstract

The author investigates the history of the debate on the relationship between psychotherapy and Christianity, in particular in Northern America. He develops an own conceptual framework in order to arrive at his own assessment and position in the debate.

The twofold central research question is:

*What are the mutual relations between worldviews and psychotherapy?*

And,

*What do these interrelationships imply for conceptions of psychotherapeutic professionalism?*

The result is that the worldview related presuppositions of secular professional care, focusing on personal autonomy and other Western values, are not obvious; they ask for continued reflection. Not only individual autonomy deserves attention but as much the embedding of clients into their own social environment with its own norms and values. The scope of this outcome is not limited to Christianity in all its variations but extends to many more worldviews.

This conclusion is the result of a literature study devoted to two American journals of psychology and Christianity (*Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*) in which the debate is conducted from their first issues in the seventies and eighties of the previous century onward.

The outcomes are important to Christian and secular institutions for mental health care. If the latter ignores the own presuppositions of institutional policy, utilized therapeutic methods, and the personal approach of the therapist, then the life and worldviews of clients run the risk of being compromised, with all the consequences this entails.

Loonstra, B. (2016). *Worldview and Psychotherapy. An Analysis of the Christian Integration Debate* (427 pp.). International Series in Mental Health and Religion, 2. M.H.F. van Uden (Ed.) Aachen – Germany, 2016, Shaker Verlag. ISBN 978-3-8440-4170-5

### The Section has an informative website!

The new website of the WPA Section on Religion and Spirituality and Psychiatry is online

[www.religionandpsychiatry.org](http://www.religionandpsychiatry.org)

It informs about news, events, resources (papers, books, videos, groups, research tools, university groups) on spirituality and mental health.

In addition, it contains all issues of *Psyche & Spirit* (Section's newsletter) and the WPA Position Statement on Religion and Spirituality in Psychiatry.

If you have any suggestions to improve the website, please just let us know!

### Training course

WPA Training Course for psychiatrists including residents, and for mental health professionals on Religion, Spirituality and Mental Health in clinical practice across cultures.

This program is designed to help in training psychiatric residents. The program is organized into several modules, the first of which is a core module which provides an overview of the importance of addressing religious and spirituality issues during patient management.

Each module contains:

- Pre and post test
- Slides
- Lecture notes for trainers
- Course syllabus and other handouts for participants
- Suggested reading list

Steering Committee:

*Chairman:* Peter Verhagen

*Members:* Prof. Nahla Nagy, Prof. John Cox, Prof. Simon Dein, Prof. Alexander Moreira-Almeida

Module 1: Overview of fundamental aspects of Religion and Spirituality in psychiatric practice.

Module 2: Addressing Religious and Spiritual issues in patient interview.

Module 3: Integrating Religious and Spiritual issues in different types of psychotherapy.

Module 4: Different practices across cultures.

Part I will be presented again at the WPA International Congress in Cape Town next November.

### Interesting Websites

Crossroads is the newsletter published by the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health, Duke University: <http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/index.php/publications/crossroads>

Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion: membership includes the Journal Religion, Brain & Behavior. <https://www.ibcsr.org/>

The European Network for the Research of Religion, Spirituality and health. The research institute promotes research, training and networking in the field of religion, spirituality and health, both in Switzerland and across Europe. <http://www.fig.ch/en/home>.

### Calendar of events

WPA 2016 International Congress, November 18-22, Cape Town (SA)

Psychiatry: Integrative Care for the Community. [www.wpacapetown2016.org.za](http://www.wpacapetown2016.org.za)

WPA XVII World Congress of Psychiatry, 8-12 October 2017. Messe Berlin, Germany.

<http://www.wpaberlin2017.com/>

## Meeting point

Dear Colleagues,

In the section of Religion, Spirituality & Psychiatry, we have great interest in communicating with our colleagues besides our website.

You are all invited to send your opinions about unmet needs in psychiatric teaching, training, and care concerning religion and spirituality, difficulties faced during practices, stories from different cultures and future research plans to improve our understanding of the links between psychiatry and spirituality as well as mental health care.

I am sure you will assist us in this coming effort by sending your contributions and comments at <http://religionandpsychiatry.org/main/contact/>

Prof. Nahla Nagy, Co-chair Section Religion, Spirituality & Psychiatry, [nahlanagy64@yahoo.com](mailto:nahlanagy64@yahoo.com)

## Join the Section

### Join the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry!

If you are a clinician or researcher working with mental health and have an interest in spirituality, you can become a member of our section. It is free and would allow you to be in touch with peers that share your interests. Some benefits:

- You will be kept posted on the latest developments in Spirituality and Psychiatry around the globe!
- Possibility of contributing to the discussion and improvement of the understanding, scientific research, and clinical integration of spirituality in mental health care
- Networking with researchers and clinicians from all over the world

To join us it is free and easy, you just need to fill out the form [here](#).

([www.wpanet.org/joinSection.php?section\\_id=11](http://www.wpanet.org/joinSection.php?section_id=11))