

# Mental Health Conference

5 September 2007

Venue: Hough End Centre, Manchester

## Culture and Mental Health: Intercultural perspectives in Mental Health

### About the conference

The symptoms of psychological and mental disorders occur in all cultures around the world but have different meanings in diverse cultural contexts, both for the psychologically disturbed and the mentally ill and for the families and societies in which they live. In one cultural context, these disorders may be associated with demonic possession or the effects of witchcraft and sorcery, requiring spiritual healing. In another context, it may be perceived as a genetically inherited brain disease, requiring the intervention of psychotropic medicine or as environmentally caused disorders that require psychological interventions.

Do these cultural differences make any real difference in the experience of these mental and psychological illnesses and their appropriate treatment and outcome? For example, is it possible to diagnose a schizophrenic patient as “possessed” and provide medications or healing to obtain a good outcome? Or is it possible to diagnose a patient suffering from depression as being affected by an “evil eye” and to treat him cognitively by a spiritual healer or a psychologist who shares his culture? Where different cultures have divergent meaning systems, what counts as a symptom and what do the symptoms signify? Are mental health services equipped to deal with the shifting definitions of what constitutes a ‘problem’ and ‘treatment’ in response to shifting social and political contexts? How universally applicable is Western medicine, which advocates an individualised notion of ‘self’ and the isolative biomedical ‘disease’ model, to non-western communities, who often have a collective orientation and define problems in relation to ‘illness’, which includes social contexts and cultural identity?

With increasing migration of diverse communities to Multicultural Britain, these enquiries have brought about much attention in the way mental illness is conceptualised by Black and minority ethnic communities, which are, largely, socially excluded groups. A well documented pattern of a lack of appropriate service provision, poverty, deprivation, racist stereotyping and social powerlessness has also shown to greatly impact their engagement with mental health services.

### Aims of the conference

- With the increasing influence of cross-cultural psychology and psychiatry, the conference aims at drawing the attention of mental health practitioners in Britain to this important issue.

- By inviting experts who have long experience in practicing psychiatric and psychotherapeutic interventions in various cultures, the

organizers of the conference hope it will be a good learning experience for the participants.

· Finally, it is hoped that the recommendations of this meeting may be of help to mental health authorities in improving their mental health services to minority groups in the UK.

## **SPEAKERS:**

### **Suman Fernando**

Hon. Senior Lecturer in Mental Health  
European Centre for Migration & Social Care (MASC)  
University of Kent at Canterbury  
Visiting Professor in the Department of Applied Social Sciences  
London Metropolitan University

*"Cultural diversity, Identity and Spirituality – an overview"*

### **Julianne Boutaleb**

Lead Psychologist  
Early Start Community Psychology Team

*"Working collaboratively with Muslim mothers with postnatal depression"?*  
*"Psycho-education for Muslim families: challenges and themes."*

### **Professor Malik Badri**

Higher Education Commission Professor of Psychology (HEC Professor)  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
New Campus  
International Islamic University Islamabad  
Islamabad, Pakistan

*'The qalb (heart), the role of waswasah (whispers) and psychospiritual therapy'*

### **Prof. Lena Robinson**

School of Social Sciences, University of Paisley, Paisley

*'Revisiting Black perspectives in Psychology'*

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Early Registration: email: [eventsbooking@gmail.com](mailto:eventsbooking@gmail.com) for Registration Form.

Statutory Sector £120.00

Voluntary Sector £ 80.00

(includes Tea/ Coffee/ Lunch/ Delegate pack/ Attendance Certificate)

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