

International perspectives on mental health

Edited by Hamid Ghodse

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Preface

The publication of specially commissioned country profiles has been one of the main features of *International Psychiatry*, a journal with a focus on mental health policy, administration, the audit and management of mental health services and training in psychiatry around the world. These profiles are original articles which have gone through the journal's normal peer-review process. The authors were asked to restrict their profile to about 1500 words, and not more than 12 references and 2 tables, graphs or figures. Each profile includes a section on the demography of the country so that information on service provision and training can be seen in context.

Country profiles are also expected to cover the following areas: mental health policy and legislation; mental health service delivery; psychiatric training (both undergraduate and postgraduate), including the number and type of residence programmes, examinations and the type of qualification bestowed; psychiatric subspecialties and allied professions (e.g. child psychiatry, psychotherapy, psychiatric nursing); main areas of research; workforce issues, including the number of psychiatrists in the country; psychiatric associations (if any) and frequency of meetings; human rights issues (if any); and any other issues likely to be of interest to international colleagues and in particular to Members and Fellows of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK and abroad. Within this structure individual profiles differ in both style and content, reflecting varying levels of the general development of the country as well as sociocultural differences and different attitudes to the practice of psychiatry.

Each issue of *International Psychiatry* includes new country profiles, effectively building up a data bank about mental health and psychiatric practice in many parts of the world. The series has generated considerable interest and highlighted the fact that many people, for a variety of reasons, want to find out about the state of mental health services in other countries. However, such information has not previously been easily available and the College has received a number of enquiries relating to this, namely from psychiatrists planning to visit other countries, often for teaching purposes or to provide services, as well as other doctors, nurses and social workers

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interested in finding out about mental health services elsewhere, sometimes because a patient may be returning to their native land. Journalists are another source of enquiry, often because there has been a major incident that has brought mental health needs and psychiatry in a particular country into focus. Students wishing to do their electives in another country also seek information. It is worth noting that enquiries about mental health and psychiatry are not limited to individuals from the UK but have been received from all continents.

Given this level of interest it was decided to assemble all of the country profiles published in *International Psychiatry* in one volume. This will facilitate access to the published information and highlight the similarities and differences between countries. It is a unique collection of authoritative papers from 91 countries around the world, each one written by an experienced senior practitioner familiar with all aspects of psychiatry in their country.

In the globalised world of today, with significant movement of populations across the world and constant dialogue between professionals in different countries, it is important that we all have a better understanding of practice in different countries. The individual country profiles, as published in *International Psychiatry* and collected together in this volume, make a huge contribution to increasing that shared understanding. Until now there has been no worldwide view of psychiatry and mental health. This book fills that gap and, more importantly, encourages the reader to think about different approaches to mental health and psychiatric practice, education and training rather than blindly accepting that local practice is the only way. It will undoubtedly be recommended for supplementary reading on courses on global mental health and will be a 'must have' for university libraries in medicine, psychiatry and behavioural medicine.

Hamid Ghodse

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