

# Person-centred psychiatry: The recent 10th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology

Real persons, including patients and psychiatrists, are at the centre of psychiatry! So guided the theme 'Hypotheses, Neuroscience and Real Persons' of the 10th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology (PPP) held at extravagant Sun City from 26 to 30 August 2007. This theme was announced at the 7th International Conference in Heidelberg, Germany, in 2004, after the bid to host the conference in South Africa had been accepted in 2002. The Organising Committee was particularly pleased to learn later that the theme of real persons being at the centre of psychiatry is also a top programmatic priority of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), for in 2005 the General Assembly of the WPA approved the Institutional Program for Psychiatry of the Person (WPA-IPPP).

The WPA-IPPP goals can be summarised as the promotion of a psychiatry *of* the person (of the totality of the person's health, both ill and positive), *by* the person (with clinicians extending themselves as full human beings), *for* the person (assisting the fulfilment of the person's life project), and *with* the person (in respectful collaboration with the person who consults).<sup>1-4</sup> Professor Juan Mezzich (WPA president) and Professor John Cox (WPA Secretary-General) were the real WPA persons who congruently made presentations at the conference, entitled respectively 'Towards a person-centered integrative diagnosis' and 'The birth of the person: towards an integrative psychiatry'. In doing so, WPA endorsement of the conference resonated substantially with the theme of 10th PPP conference at the cutting edge.

Thematic resonance came also in the real persons of the hosts, being the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry (INPP) and the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP), as well as the other endorsing associations, being the African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professions (AAPAP), the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa (PSSA) and the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA). About 94 oral presentations, including plenary sessions by international leaders in the field, on challenging, thought-provoking and even unsettling topics stimulated delegates and demonstrated the strengths and the shortcomings of both empirical and conceptual methodologies in addressing the theme.

Thematic resonance came furthermore from the bumper August issue of the *South African Journal of Psychiatry (SAJP)*, which featured the conference abstracts as well as the international set of editorial papers on the theme. Most interestingly, the editorials elucidate South Africa's key role in hosting this landmark event for the first time in Africa.<sup>5</sup> (The issue is now available open-access at <http://www.sajp.org.za>.)

Of the 400 or so delegates from 21 countries, including a few patients as presenters, most were from Africa, which enriched the theme with African reverberations of cultural diversity and first-hand experiences of the continent's people. These African reverberations, together with conceptual-analytical and interpretative methodologies from other continents, provided new insights and challenges in the understanding of neuroscientific advances and the ethics of psychiatric practice. From these insights and challenges, so much enthusiasm transpired that a special interest group for Philosophy and Psychiatry in the African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Professions (AAPAP), the Association's first special interest group, is now being set up. Interested people may contact me at [cwvanstaden@icon.co.za](mailto:cwvanstaden@icon.co.za) for more details.

Next year's International Conference, the 11th, is scheduled to be held in Dallas, Texas, from 6 to 8 October 2008 with the theme 'Psychiatry and Freedom' (<http://www.inpponline.org>).

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1. Mezzich JE, Salloum IM. On person-centred integrative diagnosis. *Die Psychiatrie* 2007; 4: 262-265.
2. Mezzich JE. The dialogical basis of our profession: psychiatry with the person. *World Psychiatry* 2007; 6: 129-130.
3. Mezzich JE, Salloum IM. Towards innovative international classification and diagnostic systems: ICD-11 and person-centred integrative diagnosis. *Acta Psychiatr Scand* 2007; 116: 1-5.
4. Mezzich JE, Christodoulou G. Psychiatry for the person and its ethical perspectives. *South African Journal of Psychiatry* 2007; 13: 71-73.
5. Van Staden CW, Fulford KWM. Hypothesis, neuroscience, and real persons: the theme of the 10th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology. *South African Journal of Psychiatry* 2007; 13: 68-71.