

AAPAP AFFILIATION

The African Association of Psychiatrists and Allied Disciplines (AAPAP) was recently officially constituted at the World Congress of Psychiatry (WPA) held in Yokohama, Japan.

The new executive committee appointed for a two-year period include: Dr Frank Njenga of Kenya (President); Professor Robin Emsley of South Africa (Secretary); Professor Bisi Odejide of Nigeria (Treasurer); Dr Fred Kigosi of Uganda; Dr Abdullah Abdelrahman of Sudan and Dr Mesfin Araya of Ethiopia.

WPA President, Professor Ahmed Okasha of Egypt, accepted its constitution and approved its affiliation.

Professor Emsley appealed for information on significant clinical and service developments in Africa, which could be used in reports to the WPA and also in future newsletters.

Dr Frank Njenga, Professor Mario Maj and the other three members on the Publications Committee are investigating ways to improve the distribution of *World Psychiatry*.

AAPAP Objectives

- To promote positive interaction among African mental health workers.
- To identify areas of most urgent need.
- To identify areas of inter- and intra-regional collaboration, research and training.
- To encourage the use of scientific evidence in clinical practice of psychiatry in the region.
- To promote training and educational opportunities with a view to establishing professional and ethical standards of practice.
- To encourage regional programmes for fighting stigma.
- To act as a continental lobby group for mental health at national, regional and international level, including the WPA, WHO and other UN agencies.

AAPAP membership

Full member:

Any psychiatrist registered with the national regulatory authority.

Associate member:

Any mental health worker registered with the national regulatory authority.

International full members:

Psychiatrists residing outside Africa and registered with an appropriate professional body.

International associate members:

Mental health workers residing outside Africa and registered with an appropriate professional body.

2002 MEDIA AWARDS

The Mental Health Information Centre recently announced the winners of the 2002 Mental Health Media Awards for exceptional journalism in covering mental health issues.

The national judging panel included representatives from the MHIC, the Department of Health, the MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders, the SA Federation for Mental Health, the SA Society of Psychiatrists, and various support and advocacy groups.

The award winners were:

- Newspapers: Willemien Brummer (*Die Burger*);
- Magazines: Adele Hamilton (*Fair Lady*);
- Radio/TV/Internet: Raeesa Mohammed (*Lotus FM*);
- Overall winner for 2002: Catriona Ross (*Cosmopolitan*);
- Special Recognition Certificates: Ann Donald (editor of *Fair Lady*), the *Pretoria News*, and Fakir Hassan (SABC, Public Service Announcements).

INFORMATION CENTRE FLOODED WITH CALLS

The MHIC website at www.mentalhealthsa.co.za has attracted considerable interest since it was revamped in May 2002. It received over 50 000 successful requests in the past six months, with the most busy days being Mondays and Wednesdays. A third of the visits came from inside South Africa but the rest were from all over the world.

Likewise, the MHIC call centre attracted 500 calls during the month around National Anxiety Disorders Awareness Week. General information enquiries came from patients (37%), family of patients (26%), or medical professionals (16%). Most requested information on schizophrenia (16%), depression (16%), PTSD (11%) or other anxiety/stress conditions (19%).

COMPARING NEW ANTIDEPRESSANTS

A recent symposium held in Copenhagen and attended by 1 600 psychiatrists, made comparisons between a number of antidepressants.

Papers presented there by psychiatrists from leading institutions in France, England, Ireland and Canada, emphasised the need for antidepressants to have faster onset, reduced side-effects and increased tolerability to improve patient compliance.

Escitalopram emerged as a popular preference. This is the active ingredient in citalopram, marketed locally as Cipramil from Lundbeck Pharmaceuticals. This is widely prescribed in Europe and the first choice of 70% of SA psychiatrists.

Dr Dora Wynchank, a psychiatrist in private practice in Johannesburg, said that hopefully escitalopram would lead to the development of the ideal antidepressant. Available drugs work in only 60-70% of patients 'so any drug that offers a higher success rate has to be taken seriously,' she said.