

FAMILY MURDERS IN SA: SASOP CALLS FOR MORE FOR CHILDREN

In response to growing attention in recent months to family murders SASOP has called for more focus on children, who are frequently the main victims, living in abusive homes and often surviving attempted family murder, with horrific psychological sequelae. A call was also made for the recognition and treatment of psychiatric syndromes by general medical practitioners as well as for the upgrading of psychiatric services. 'Psychiatric clinics are a specialised area and mental health should not be incorporated in general medical clinics. There has been a worrying trend to subsume psychiatry into primary health care but health care workers in primary facilities often lack the skills to recognise and treat psychiatric conditions. Psychiatric services need to be upgraded so that the best possible care is offered to those in our communities seeking help,' said SASOP PRO, Dr Dora Wynchank.

If these changes are instituted, they will go a long way in alleviating stress, psychological dysfunction and aggressive outbursts in the family environment.

Male depression, often compounded by alcohol and substance abuse, is believed to be a major factor in family murder, while stressful life events on a background of unemployment also may contribute to the phenomenon. Jealousy has also been identified as one of the most significant factors in determining risk for homicide.

Source: www.sasop.co.za

RESOURCE BOOK ON MENTAL HEALTH, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LEGISLATION

A *Resource Book on Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation* has been published by the World Health Organization and aims at guiding countries and supporting stakeholders in developing mental health legislation. Containing examples of experiences and practices, as well as extracts of laws and other law-related documents from different countries worldwide, the book sets out to highlight the key issues and principles to be incorporated into legislation through what other countries are doing in the areas of mental health and human rights. Also included is a 'step-by-step' checklist for reviewing existing legislation and developing new laws.

The publication may be downloaded at www.who.int

PSYCHIATRY AND NEUROSCIENCE IN AFRICA

A very successful regional Collegium Internationale Neuro-Psychopharmacologicum (CINP) meeting took place in Cape Town from 20 to 22 April 2005. The meeting was held in conjunction with the International Brain Research Organisation, the World Psychiatric Association and the Metals and Brain Society. Local organisations involved included the African Association for Psychiatrists and Allied Professions (AAPAP), the Society of Neuroscientists in Africa, the South African Society of Psychiatrists, and the South African Neuroscience Society.

Under the theme of 'Psychiatry and neuroscience in Africa', some 552 psychiatrists and neuroscientists from as far afield as Japan, Greece, China and Australia discussed recent research and clinical issues.

A highlight of the meeting was a 1-day symposium focusing on psychiatry in Africa. Presentations focused on critical issues such as limited resources, the devastating effects of HIV, and the enormous ignorance and prejudices that exist regarding mental health issues. With the support of industry, travel grants were available to many of the African delegates and an important meeting took place between members of the CINP council and the AAPAP executive to discuss ways in which the CINP could support the development of psychiatry and neuroscience in lower income countries.

In addition to a number of industry-supported symposia, the Lundbeck Institute of Neuroscience presented two workshops focusing on an evidence-based approach to the treatment of mood disorders. These were run by Dr Andre Joubert (South Africa/Denmark) and Brian Leonard.

I would sincerely like to thank those CINP members who made a special effort to attend this meeting. I believe that it was an important milestone in the development of psychiatry and neuroscience in Africa.

Robin Emsley, *Congress chairperson*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 14th National Congress of the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP): 'Facts and values in psychiatric practice', 10 - 14 September 2006 at the Royal Swazi Sun, Swaziland. Enquiries: sonja@londocor.co.za
- 10th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology: 'Hypotheses, neuroscience and real persons', 26 - 30 August 2007 at Sun City, South Africa (hosted by SASOP). Enquiries: sonja@londocor.co.za