

Traditional Healers & Mental Health Services

10th November 2010
London Conference



ETHNIC HEALTH INITIATIVE

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Many people do not seek help from their GP or via their local mental health services when they become unwell for a number of different reasons. Some people seek advice and support via traditional healers, preferring possibly to enter into a therapeutic dialogue with someone who is from the same culture or who understands their cultural perspective and can facilitate some form of cultural re-integration. The reasons why people seek help from traditional healers vary. Outside the biomedical model the mind / body dichotomy is less evident. The "idiom/s of distress" individuals present with may not be as compartmentalised as they are in the medical model.

Traditional healing is practised in many countries across the world. Healers use a number of interventions to heal people including; recitation of specific prayers, fasting, the wearing of amulets, the chanting of specific music, meditation, the making of sacrifices, conducting exorcism ceremonies and the ingestion of medicines and potions. In the UK some people receiving care from their local mental health services will have also sought out and may well be receiving care simultaneously from a traditional healer. However, the extent to which this manner of help seeking behaviour and the healing interventions they have received are acknowledged or discussed with the service user by mental health professionals working within the biomedical model, varies.

Many people, including mental health professionals are dismissive of traditional healers and their practices, citing a lack of evidence base to prove the effectiveness of healing interventions or their concerns about the amount of money some healers charge. However, there are those who are interested in finding out more about healers and their practices. The extent to which mental health professionals are able to collaborate and / or work jointly with healers remains unclear. We know of very few examples where this is the case in the UK.

This one day conference will seek to demystify the area of traditional healing and will focus on:

- Definitions of a traditional healer
- The training of healers
- Why do people seek help from a healer? What kinds of problems do they present with?
- How do healers make a "diagnosis"?
- What do healers do? Healing and healing practices
- What evidence exists about the effectiveness of healing interventions?
- What are the benefits and risks of mental health professionals and others working collaboratively with traditional healers?

Some of the key questions which will be discussed during the one day event include:

- Should and can psychiatrists and traditional healers work together?
- What possible problems might arise? What might be the benefits or risks for the service user?
- Should we be extending service models to include traditional healers?
- Do service users find the support they receive from traditional healers helpful?
- What can mental health professionals learn from traditional healers & vice versa?

Who Should attend?

This conference will be relevant to all professionals in the field of Mental Health and Social Care, including those from Local Authorities and NHS trusts across the UK, Chaplains, Community Faith Leaders & Healers, Equality Leads, Community Development Workers, Service User Representatives, Charities, Third Sector, Educational Establishments, Academics and Policy makers.



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Programme of the day

- 9.00 - 9.30 Registration, Tea & Coffee
- 9.30 - 9.50 Chair
Muslim Healers in London
Dr. Simon Dein
Senior Lecturer in Anthropology and Medicine at the University College London and Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow.
- 9.50 - 10.40 Meeting Population Needs for Mental Health: Do Traditional Healers Have A Role?
Professor Rachel Jenkins
Professor of Epidemiology and International Mental Health Policy, Director of WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Research and Training.
- 10.40 - 11.30 The Practice of Spiritual Healing in Greece: A Positive Example of Approaching Health and Well-being from a Spiritual Perspective
Dr. Fevronia Christodoulidi
Counsellor/Psychotherapist, Supervisor and Counselling Trainer in Manchester.
- 11.30 - 11.45 Tea & Coffee
- 11.45 - 12.30 Co-operation or Collision? Healing Cultures and Collaboration in Mental Health Care in South Africa and Lessons for the UK
Malcolm Alexander
Consultant in Public Involvement and Community Development and Associate Researcher with the UCL Research Department of Mental Health Sciences.
- 12.30 - 1.00 Morning Q&A
- 1.00 - 1.45 Lunch
- 1.45 - 2.35 Traditional Healing, Therapy and Mental Health
Dr. William West
Director of Professional Doctorate in Counselling, Reader in Counselling Studies, School of Education, University of Manchester.
- 2.35 - 3.25 Under What Circumstances Do People with Mental Health Problems Consult Traditional Healers? Examples from Italy and Lessons for the UK
Dr. Micol Ascoli
Consultant Psychiatrist, East London NHS Foundation Trust/Tower Hamlets Cultural Consultation Service Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer, Queen Mary University of London.
- 3.25 - 3.40 Tea & Coffee
- 3.40 - 4.30 Traditional Healers and Mental Health Professionals Working Together: Confusion, Collaboration or Creative Synthesis?
Jane Gilbert
Independent Consultant Psychologist in Penrith, Cumbria.
- 4.30 - 4.45 Afternoon Q&A
- 4.45 - 5.00 Plenary, Closure & Evaluation sheets



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Speaker Profile

Simon Dein, MRCPsych, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Anthropology and Medicine at the University College London and Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow. He runs an MSc course on Culture and Health and is currently the editor of the journal of Mental Health, Religion and Culture (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/carfax/13674676.html>). He also has written and researched extensively on Religion and Health, some of his published books include 'Readings in Cultural Psychiatry', and more recently 'Culture and Cancer Care: Anthropological Insights in Oncology' and 'Religion and Healing Among the Lubavitch Community in Stamford Hill, North London: A Case Study of Hasidism: 27 (Jewish Studies)'

Rachel Jenkins is a psychiatrist, epidemiologist and mental health policy maker. She has been Director, WHO Collaborating Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London since 1997 where she is also Professor of Epidemiology and International Mental Health Policy, working with governments, international and national organisations to give support on mental health policy and implementation to low and middle income countries, as well as on research and training, with a variety of projects in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe. She initiated the British national psychiatric morbidity survey programme, and led the mental health aspects of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. She has around 350 publications, including 30 books and monographs.

Fevronia (Fenia) Christodoulidi, PhD, is a Greek counsellor/ psychotherapist residing and practising in the UK for the last 9 years. She has worked in a variety of settings as therapist, supervisor and counselling trainer. She has recently completed her doctoral study at the University of Manchester, exploring the experiences of migrant therapists and is currently employed as a counselling tutor at the Metanoia Institute. Her research interests include the areas of cross-cultural counselling, therapists' psychospiritual development, postmodern qualitative methodologies and the interplay between spirituality and therapy. Her spiritual and healing perspective draws from the philosophy developed at the Servers' Society in Athens where she has also trained as a spiritual healer and she has been a member since 1994.

Malcolm Alexander is a Consultant in Public Involvement and Community Development and Associate Researcher with the UCL Research Department of Mental Health Sciences, on the role of religion and spirituality in mental health care amongst Bangladeshi communities in east London. He also has a special interest in the professional development of traditional healing in South Africa. Until recently he was a lecturer in 'Patient and Public Involvement in Health/Social Care', 'Power and Empowerment' and community development at Westminster University. He is a leading health campaigner, with a special interest in emergency care, complementary medicine and the traumatic effects of

detention on asylum seekers in immigration removal centres.

William West is a reader in Counselling Studies at the University of Manchester where he directs the Counselling Studies programme. He is best known for his research and writing around spirituality and therapy and his PhD in 1995 was a study of integrating psychotherapy and healing. His latest book, due out this autumn, is Exploring therapy, spirituality and healing (Palgrave 2010). Previous books: Integrating traditional healing practices into counselling and psychotherapy include (co-edited with Dr Roy Moodley) (Sage 2005), Spiritual issues in therapy (Palgrave 2004) and psychotherapy and spirituality (Sage 2000).

Micol Ascoli is a Psychiatrist and a Psychotherapist working in the multicultural and multiethnic area of Newham, East London. After completing her training in Italy, she moved to London in 2004, where she has been working as an NHS Consultant ever since. She is the Newham Clinical Lead in Cultural Psychiatry. She is a Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer at Queen Mary University. She is the Consultant Psychiatrist for the Tower Hamlets Cultural Consultation Service. She is an active member of the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry and she has presented papers and chaired Symposia at international conferences since 2001.

Jane Gilbert is an Independent Consultant Clinical Psychologist based in the UK. After many years working as a clinician and manager within NHS Mental Health Services, she became freelance in 2001. Jane now specialises in consultancy to international NGOs, the evaluation of mental health and psychosocial projects, and the design and facilitation of workshops/training on psychological and mental health issues in cross cultural contexts. She has worked in Gambia, Uganda, Lesotho, Ghana, Liberia and Jordan. Jane's particular interests include the effects of culture and language on personal identity, and the integration of different cultural understandings in both training and mental health services.

