

16TH INTERNATIONAL PSYCHIATRIC CONFERENCE

Javed Akhtar

16th International Psychiatric Conference was held at Lahore, Pakistan from December 16 to 18, 2006. It was organized by Pakistan Psychiatric Society in collaboration with South Asian Division of Royal College of Psychiatrists, British Pakistani Psychiatrist association and Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

Basic theme of the conference was “Disaster’s impact on Mental Health and its psycho- Social Rehabilitation” in the back ground of devastating earthquake of October 8, 2005. Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS) is an organized body of Pakistani psychiatrists struggling continuously for the cause of mentally ill and professional development, of Pakistani Psychiatrists, since its inception in 1968.

December is comparatively a colder month in Pakistan but Lahore is not much affected by seasonal change in winter that is why the local and foreign delegates enjoyed being at Lahore for the conference.

There were about more than 300 participants of the conference both from within the country and abroad.

DAY I:

Scientific session was inaugurated by a state of the art lecture by professor David Kingdon, on “Cognitive Therapy for Psychosis: An Evidence Based Approach”. His lecture was very appealing for the audience and especially the Pakistan Psychiatrists who are less familiar with non-pharmacological interventions and techniques applied in the management of psychosis. Prof. Kingdon took the help of video clips and role play in illustrating different psychotherapeutic techniques used.

A video linked conference from Australia was another highlight of the day. This video teleconference from Melbourne helped to update participants on different aspects of Mood Disorders and replied to the queries of audience. Dr. Riaz Bhatti, President Pakistan Psychiatric Society was the facilitator of this interactive session.

One full session was devoted to the mental health needs of earth quake survivor. In this session, many leading Pakistani psychiatrists shared their views and experiences with each other. It was encouraging to note that a considerable research work is underway to assess the

psycho pathology and mental health needs of the disaster affected population.

On the same day annual general meetings of British Pakistani Psychiatrists and Pakistan Psychiatric Society executives were held between 5 to 5-30 PM.

Day 2:

Day 2 was inaugurated by a more scientific session of “Genetics in psychiatry”. It was presided by Prof. Musarrat Hussain. In this session different renowned psychiatrists, from UK and Canada, discussed the genetic bases of common psychiatric disorders such as Schizophrenia, Bipolar affective disorders, childhood autism and hyperactivity disorders.

Anxiety and depression session was one of the well attended sessions on this day. In this session many of the local psychiatrists highlighted the major issues confronted in routine practice and common presentations of major psychiatric disorders in cultural context. The most useful presentation in this session was on, “Anxiety management guidelines by anxiety awareness board”. It was well delivered by Prof. Riaz Bhatti.

In the session of substance misuse Dr. Sanjay Chugh from India introduced the method of “Ultra Rapid Opioid Detoxification” in newer treatment strategies. According to his view the major advantage of this procedure is the immediate removal of addict’s fear of intense and prolonged withdrawal. The other highlights on this day were those of community psychiatry and child and adolescent psychiatry. An interesting study in this session was by Dr. Tazvin Ajaz. The aim of the study was to identify the relationship between the authoritative and the permissive way of parenting and development of psychopathology in children and adolescents.

The last session of the day on “psychosis” included an interesting study about “Effects of fasting on serum lithium level and mental status in Bipolar Affective Disorder patients”. This study, presented by Department of Psychiatry, Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar used an innovative approach to examine the effect of lithium on fasting. Its findings will be of great value for psychiatrists about decision making for Bipolar Affective Disorder patients in the month of Ramadan in Muslim population.

The day was closed by general body meeting of Pakistan Psychiatric Society and Gala dinner accompanied by musical evening.

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DAY 3:

Last day of the conference was concerned with community and liaison psychiatry. Dr. Jameel Hussain and Dr Nazish gave their talk in detail about “stigma” in psychiatry. They proposed that there was a need to launch a good programme, directly interacting with health professionals and common man at least at district level to overcome this problem.

The liaison psychiatry session included presentations on “Psychiatric morbidity among cases with Hepatitis B & C viruses”, “The attitude and perception of Hospital doctors about the management of Psychiatric disorders” and “Liaison Psychiatry: A subspecialty in search of recognition “ by Dr Wajid Ali. Another important study in the session was from Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad Dogar. He reported higher prevalence of Major depression and Generalized anxiety disorders in cardiac patients than general population in Pakistan. Being female, house wife and

widow according to his findings were the high risk factors for developing these disorders.

A very useful workshop was on “Autistic Spectrum Disorders: challenges in diagnosis and treatment’. It was a good interactive session, facilitated by Dr. Waqar Azeem.

Chairman organizing committee Prof. Riaz Bhatti and his team hosted an interesting programme. It was a pleasure to attend the conference. The scientific programme was well planned and well organized. However, the attendance in various scientific sessions appeared to be a sad reflection of the participants’ priorities. These conferences provide a good opportunity for social interactions, but we must not forget that the conferences like this provides a rare opportunity for our continuing professional development. There is urgent need to organize these activities as a part of a well organized continuing professional development programme.