

Transcultural psychiatry



Special interest group



Transcultural Psychiatry Special Interest Group (TSIG)

Newsletter, Summer 2025



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Message from the TSIG Chair

Dear all,

I would like to start this piece with saying many thank you. Thank you to all the readers and contributors to the newsletter and thank you to all the individuals and groups raising the important matter of transcultural psychiatry at many forums. Thank you to all the patients, carers and colleagues who speak up when we don't always get it right in understanding the unique cultural aspects of an individual and help us improve. I would like to say special thanks to the executive group, they have been a great force of support and do this in addition to their time and are so dedicated.

As I step down as chair this Summer, I feel incredibly proud of all the achievements of the group and the profession and am also very aware that this journey has a long way to go. I am sure our new Chair Dr Saima Niaz will continue to lead the group with your support and please do keep sharing your ideas.

In the last few years, we have participated in many college initiatives including providing input to the EDI work, training aspects and our conferences have been widely praised for sharing crucial aspects of transcultural psychiatry. I have been inspired by the many people from near and far who have contacted us, from medical schools, college divisions, and more to do talks at their events on transcultural psychiatry. There have been trainee med groups at BSMHFT and SLAM who took special initiative to develop knowledge and skills in this area by creating spaces for conversations by people across cultures.

I also especially thank Dr Emmeline Lagunes-Cordoba who is our editor for our newsletter, and it takes a lot of interest, time and expertise to create something that we can all learn from.

I would like to end by saying that transcultural psychiatry is an essential part of all psychiatry. I would like us to continue to be politely curious and open about what we don't know, not make assumptions on anyone cultures without checking with them and be self-aware of our own gaps. We still have a long way to go for patients to trust us in a way to be really heard, and we will continue to work together on improving this.

Once again, thank you all, it has been my utmost honour to be chair of the transcultural psychiatry group for the last several years.

Dr Fabida Aria



Notes from the editor

As time goes by, every year seems to be passing quicker and quicker, and this year, or at least the last six months, has just flown by, finally bringing my favourite time of the year, summertime! With longer days, warmer temperatures, and greener spaces, summer can definitely bring the best of us, motivating us to go out, socialise, enjoy life, and in some cases, even inspiring us to write, like it has been the case with many members of our Transcultural psychiatry special interest group (TSIG). So, here we are again, bringing you the latest edition of our TSIG newsletter, in which you will read not only about the past event and activities focused on transcultural psychiatry, but also about the importance of cultural competency and other pieces aiming to inspire others to acquire a transcultural psychiatry perspective, and of course, giving you a great read for you to enjoy this summer days.

In this edition of the TSIG newsletter you will read about the impact of a transcultural psychiatry workshop held as part of the Grand Rounds for South Yorkshire Trust had on attendees' attitudes and knowledge (Dr Khadeeja Ansar & Dr Mahira Syed); about a programme conducted in Ghana, by some members of the TSIG, to address current challenges providing psychiatric care including areas such as violence, risk assessments, addiction, leadership and supervision (Dr Hasanen Al-Taiar); and about the mental health and well-being panel titled "The challenges surrounding mental health among South Asian women", to celebrate this year's International Women Day, in which speakers highlighted the importance of considering language, cultural beliefs, and trauma when

designing and developing effective support (Dr Saima Niaz).

In this newsletter, you will also find one article focused on a QI project aiming to improve cultural competency to address health inequalities in mental health settings (Dr Gurmeash Kaur); a training protocol focused on improving cultural competence for postgraduate psychiatry trainees in the UK (Dr Arabinda N Chowdhury); and an a short piece focused on the impact of an international charity event on trauma recovery and collective healing (Dr Saadia Alvi); all pieces I hope you find interesting and inspiring.

As we know, every summer also represent the time when the RCPsych International conference takes place (June 23rd- 26th), so, we hope to see many of you at the different interesting talks and symposiums, and of course, at the TSIG lunch which will take place on Tuesday the 24th, a date we hope you have already put in your calendar, so you can come and say hello, and if interested, maybe join our always welcoming TSIG group. Now, if you can attend the international congress, we hope you can join our TSIG annual conference which will take place on the 4th of December, and which has been organised with the volunteering and international psychiatry special interest group (VIPSIG). So, please save the date and join us in which will be a wonderful day celebrating and showcasing transcultural psychiatry in the UK.

Dr Emmeline Lagunes-Cordoba



Past TSIG activities and events

Transcultural psychiatry workshop

I recently took part in delivering a Transcultural Psychiatry Workshop that was held on the 4th September 2024, as part of the Grand Rounds for South Yorkshire Trust, held by Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust (SHSC).

Transcultural psychiatry is a branch of psychiatry that explores the impact of cultural, ethnic and societal factors on mental health and mental illness. It acknowledges that culture profoundly influences how individuals experience, express and cope with psychological challenges. By integrating cultural awareness into clinical practice, significant disparities in healthcare delivery can be addressed, leading to improved outcomes for ethnically diverse communities.

Transcultural psychiatry has been of particular interest to me since the beginning of my career in psychiatry. In today's increasingly interconnected and diverse world, we encounter both patients and colleagues from all ethnic backgrounds and cultures almost every day. As I am working in the UK but have a South Asian background, I have been able to use that to my advantage by advocating for patients from similar backgrounds in terms of their cultural beliefs and norms. I have noticed the difference that a culturally sensitive approach can make to patient care and patient outcomes. I remember a patient that some of my junior colleagues saw and discussed with me recently. The patient had initially been experiencing what they thought were persecutory delusions, but one of my colleagues was from a culture where the 'evil eye' was considered to affect people's health in significant ways. When she saw that the patient was also from her cultural background,

she enquired about the evil eye, and was able to clarify that although this belief was held with a strong conviction, it was not a delusion, but a culturally appropriate idea. This was a stark example of how the lack of knowledge of other cultures might have changed our diagnosis and subsequent management of this patient. I have thus made it a core part of my practice to consider a patient's cultural and ethnic background when assessing them and before reaching a diagnosis. Engaging in conversations with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds has also greatly built upon my understanding of transcultural psychiatry, allowing me to provide more informed and culturally sensitive care.

This workshop was designed to cultivate a culturally competent workforce capable of understanding and addressing the complex mental health needs of marginalised populations in the community. The initiative began with an online survey distributed amongst the Trust staff and was aimed at assessing their awareness of cultural competence in healthcare. The survey also sought to identify knowledge gaps and areas of interest, helping shape the workshop's focus to ensure relevance to the participants.

The workshop started with a data-driven overview of the disparities in access to healthcare for marginalised communities in the United Kingdom and the importance of a culturally competent approach in mental health services. There were over a hundred medical professionals in our audience who engaged well in the interactive workshop. A panel of experts also contributed their viewpoints to the discussion. This panel consisted of a consultant psychiatrist, a representative of the chaplaincy, a community leader who works as GP as well an expert by

experience and a carer. This panel was diverse in terms of ethnicity, experience and perspectives. They provided valuable insights into both the opportunities and challenges they faced.

Then followed discussion on local resources and initiatives currently undergoing to address cultural diversity, such as the 'Being There' project. This project is a collaboration between the Pakistani Muslim Centre and Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust that aims to provide culturally sensitive mental health support to the local community. Melissa Simmonds, the Community Network Leader for SHSC, also spoke about the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework, an anti-racism initiative by NHS England.

The workshop concluded well with small group discussions on case scenarios. This provided participants with an opportunity to brainstorm real-world scenarios, consider how they would respond to challenges, and to explore ways to leverage opportunities for implementing culturally informed approaches.

The impact of the workshop was evaluated by pre- and post-workshop surveys. 75 participants responded to the pre-workshop survey and 48 participants responded to the post-workshop survey. In terms of comparison of the pre- and post-survey, one of the questions 'how likely are you to effectively and consistently intervene when you observe discriminatory behaviours in others' had an increase in the 'very likely' response from 29.33% to 39.58%. For the question asking about awareness of local policy around transcultural services, only 28.00% responded yes in the pre-workshop survey, but a significant 97.92% responded answered yes in

the post- workshop survey. Whereas before the workshop, 26.67% of respondents felt that their knowledge of transcultural psychiatry was 'below average', and 4.00% felt it was 'far below average', after the workshop 0.00% rated in these two categories, thus signifying a drastic increase in the knowledge of every participant who attended and filled out the surveys. The understanding of potential barriers for people from ethnic backgrounds when accessing healthcare increased in the 'above average' category from 29.33% before to 66.67% after.

The workshop had a highly positive impact, and I was particularly impressed by the engagement from the audience and their enthusiasm to learn. The case discussions were filled with interesting and engaging ideas. The audience displayed remarkable curiosity towards the panel members and showed a lot of interest in their lived experience. The use of real-life narratives helped put these concepts into context, encouraging participants to share their own experiences with the group.

Although we had limited time to get our ideas across, I believe we made a meaningful impact on the participants, one that would get them to ask the crucial questions next time they see a patient, 'is this something that is culturally normative?' and 'what can we do to make this clinical experience or service more inclusive?'. These questions mark an essential first step toward fostering a more holistic and inclusive NHS.

Dr Khadeeja Ansar & Dr Mahira Syed

Navigating Contemporary Challenges in Psychiatric Care in Ghana: A Collaborative Journey

In November 2024, a distinguished group of psychiatrists, including Dr Mohammed Al-Uzri, Dr Hasanen Al-Taïar, Dr Shivanthi Sathanandan, and Dr Anna Walder, had the privilege of visiting Ghana to address some of the key challenges in psychiatric care. This visit was part of our ongoing commitment to fostering cross-cultural collaboration and sharing knowledge to enhance mental health care practices in resource-limited settings. Over the course of the trip, we had the opportunity to engage in deep, meaningful discussions and share practical tools and insights with our Ghanaian colleagues.

The visit began with a comprehensive program that touched upon a wide range of topics essential to contemporary psychiatric care. Key areas of focus included violence risk assessments, addiction, leadership, and supervision. Each of these sessions aimed to provide actionable strategies that could be applied within the unique healthcare environment of Ghana. We were fortunate to collaborate with Dr Mohammed Al-Uzri, Dr Shivanthi Sathanandan, Dr Anna Walder, and other esteemed experts from both the UK and Ghana in delivering these workshops. These topics were not only relevant to current clinical practice, but also focused on empowering mental health professionals in Ghana to address some of the specific challenges they face in their day-to-day work.

In particular, the *Violence Risk Assessment* session was crucial in discussing how best to evaluate and manage patients at risk of violence within the mental health system, especially in a setting with limited resources. We explored validated risk assessment tools, their application, and the challenges of adapting them to the Ghanaian context. The session allowed for open dialogue about the

importance of balancing safety concerns with therapeutic interventions.

Addiction was another central topic of our discussions, particularly in relation to opioid and alcohol use, which have become growing public health concerns in the region. Through case-based discussions, we were able to delve into the complexities of treating addiction in a setting with limited access to medications and therapeutic support. Dr Shivanthi Sathanandan's expertise in addictions was invaluable in guiding these discussions, ensuring that the focus remained on providing sustainable solutions that could be adapted to local needs.

Leadership and supervision in psychiatry also emerged as critical themes. We emphasized the importance of strong leadership in mental health services to drive change and promote the implementation of best practices in challenging environments. Additionally, we explored effective supervision models that not only promote professional development but also enhance patient care outcomes. Dr Anna Walder's insight into these topics helped us understand the delicate balance between supporting healthcare workers' growth while maintaining high standards of patient care.

Throughout the week, our Ghanaian colleagues, including Dr Richard Dei Asamoah, Dr Amma Boadu, and Prof. Osei, demonstrated incredible resilience, determination, and a shared commitment to improving the mental health services within their country. Despite the challenges faced by the healthcare system in Ghana, their dedication to providing quality care to patients remained unwavering. We were deeply impressed by their resourcefulness and the innovative approaches they use to address the needs of their patients.

Moreover, the warmth and hospitality extended to us by the Ghanaian people were unmatched. Our interactions with the medical professionals, patients, and the community reinforced the importance of global collaboration in mental health care. We were reminded of the power of working together as a global community to overcome shared challenges and to bring about meaningful change.

This visit also provided a unique opportunity for us to reflect on the disparities between healthcare systems in different parts of the world. While much progress has been made in mental health care in high-income countries, the challenges faced by low- and middle-income countries like Ghana are still profound. We must continue to work together to build sustainable mental health systems that are not only effective but also equitable. Our commitment to providing support, sharing knowledge, and learning from one another will be essential in bridging these gaps.

The visit also paved the way for ongoing partnerships and future collaborations. We are

eager to continue offering support and guidance to our Ghanaian colleagues in the future, whether through further educational initiatives, mentorship, or collaborative research. The relationships forged during this visit are a testament to the power of working together to improve mental health services globally.

This journey was an unforgettable and inspiring experience, reinforcing the importance of knowledge exchange and the need for a global approach to addressing mental health challenges. We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important work and look forward to the continued development of mental health care systems in Ghana and beyond.

Dr Hasanen Al-Taïar, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Forensic TPD, Medical Member HM Tribunal Service.

Advocating for Mental Health: Reflections from the International Women's Day Panel – 9th March 2025

I had the immense honour of being invited as a speaker at the Mental Health and Well-being Panel on “The Challenges Surrounding Mental Health Among South Asian Women”, held on the 9th March 2025, in celebration of International Women's Day. The event created a powerful atmosphere of community, reflection, and healing. The event was organised in Stoke Newington by Miss Tamanna Miah, an award-winning activist and public figure—speaker, host, presenter, and TEDx speaker.



This unique gathering brought together leading voices to explore the often-hidden mental health challenges faced by South Asian women in the UK. Cultural stigma, generational expectations, and the pressure to appear “strong” in the face of hardship frequently silence these challenges.

As a panellist and advocate in this area, I emphasised the importance of recognising how cultural narratives influence our understanding and response to mental health. I called for more inclusive and culturally competent mental health services that genuinely reflect the lived realities of South Asian women, from daughters to

grandmothers; mental well-being must never be a taboo subject.

Distinguished Voices and Dignitaries

The panel was privileged to be joined by several influential figures whose support gave tremendous weight to the conversation:

- Her Excellency Abida Islam, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK (since January 27, 2025).
- Diane Abbott MP, the first Black woman elected to the UK Parliament, currently serving as Mother of the House.
- Baroness Manzila Pola Uddin MP and Dr Rupa Huq MP, both long-standing advocates for equality and inclusion.

Their presence reaffirmed the urgency of tackling mental health with both cultural understanding and policy-level commitment.

Why This Matters: A Transcultural Psychiatry Lens

This event was not just a panel discussion—it was a reflection of progress in the field of transcultural psychiatry. This discipline acknowledges that culture has a profound influence on mental health. Migration, religious identity, family roles, and community expectations shape the mental distress South Asian women experience.

The panel emphasised the importance of moving beyond a one-size-fits-all model for practitioners and systems. When designing and delivering care, it is essential to consider language, cultural beliefs, and intergenerational trauma to ensure effective

and culturally sensitive support. Clinicians must actively ingrain empathy and understanding into their practice.

Looking Ahead: Unity, Healing, and Action

This event demonstrated that change begins with conversations—when women come together, speak openly, and ensure that others truly hear them. I hope that this dialogue will serve as a springboard for:

- Greater investment in culturally informed services.
- Community-based initiatives that destigmatise mental health.
- Safe Spaces to share, seek support, and connect without fear or stigma.
- Policy changes that centre the needs of ethnic minority women in health care planning.

It was a privilege to be part of this transformative experience. I remain committed to supporting South Asian women in their journey toward mental wellness through advocacy, education, and compassion.



**Dr Saima Niaz, consultant psychiatrist
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust**

Other events

On 4th June 2025, the British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association (BPPA) hosted a well-attended community event in Leicester titled “The Interface Between Culture, Religion, and Mental Health.” The programme featured insightful presentations from religious leaders representing the Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu faiths, offering their perspectives on mental health within the context of spirituality and cultural beliefs.

This was followed by an engaging overview of common mental health symptoms and disorders delivered by Dr Rais Ahmed, General Secretary of BPPA. The event drew a diverse audience from various cultural and religious backgrounds within the local community. The talks were followed by a dynamic Q&A session, sparking thoughtful discussion and reflection. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many attendees expressing interest in similar educational initiatives in the future. The session was chaired by Dr Shahid Latif, Chair of BPPA.

Interface between Culture, Religion & Mental Health

Sunday, 4 May 2025, 2pm to 5pm
at Leicester Racecourse

FREE EVENT
Open to general public

Speakers:

Dr. Musharraf Hussain OBE Islamic Scholar, Educator & Community Leader	Pradyumna Pradip Gajjar President, ISKCON Leicester
Kartar Singh Bring Head of Chaplaincy, UHL & LPT	Dr. Rais Irfan Consultant Psychiatrist

organised by

BPPA British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association

Chair
Dr. Shahid Latif
Consultant Psychiatrist

BPPA Annual Summer Gala 2025

On 14th June 2025, BPPA held its Annual Summer Gala at the Leicester Marriott Hotel, drawing a strong turnout from members and guests. This year's CPD (Continuing Professional Development) theme focused on Resident Doctors, with the BPPA Resident Doctors' Executive Team taking the lead in delivering the educational component of the evening.

British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association
Summer Gala 2025
Mushaira, Music & Dinner

5:00 PM on Saturday, 14 June at the Leicester Marriott Hotel.
Extremely popular Professor Khalid Masood, as well as other renowned poets from Pakistan and abroad, will entertain with their latest poetry.
After a three-course dinner, a live music show by Mohsin Naqsh.

ALL TICKETS BOOKED BY 26 MAY 2025 WILL HAVE A 10% SPECIAL DISCOUNT.
THEBPPA.ORG.UK/PRODUCT/BPPA-SUMMER-GALA-2025

Following the academic programme, guests were treated to a Mushaira (Poetry Symposium) a cherished BPPA tradition now in its 17th consecutive year. The evening concluded with a formal dinner, followed by music and entertainment, providing an opportunity for members to connect, celebrate, and reflect on the year's achievements.

Open invitation

We welcome the work done by diaspora organisations, and we hope to have member from more diaspora organisations to share summaries of their events. We would love to add them to our newsletter to help promote the excellent work they do in the UK and abroad and help inspire our readers and learn more about transcultural psychiatry.



Culture, thoughts and words

Cultural Competency QI Project: Addressing Health Inequalities in Mental Health Settings

Background

People from racialised communities continue to face significant disparities in access to mental health care. They are more likely to require crisis support and often report more negative experiences within mental health services. According to the 2023 Mental Health Act Annual Report, Black and Black British men are three times more likely to be detained under the MHA and eight times more likely to be placed on a Community Treatment Order than their white counterparts. A recent report by the Centre for Mental Health¹ found that experiences of race-based discrimination can increase a person's chances of having poor mental health and makes it harder for them to get the right support at the right time. These are a few examples of challenges to access, outcomes and experience that are compounded by cultural sensitivities that are not always acknowledged or understood in clinical practice.

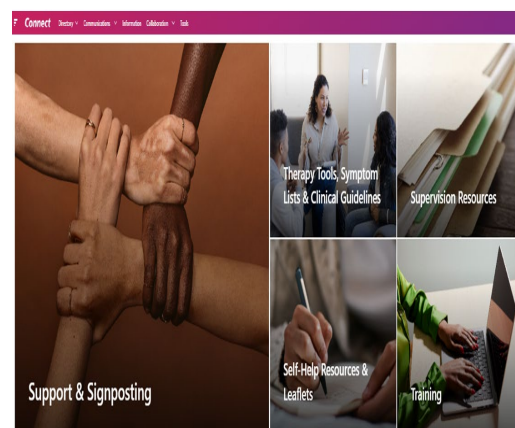
Our Quality Improvement (QI) project was initiated in response to the acknowledgement of gaps in clinical care for those from minority ethnic groups, and it feeds into the work being carried out by the Trust's² Health Inequalities Project Board. It meets some of the training elements of the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) and is aligned with the Trust's anti-racism framework. As a PCREF pilot site, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) is committed to actively addressing these inequalities.

¹The Centre for Mental Health, Pursing racial justice in mental health, January 2024

Our Journey

The project began in March 2023 as an initial concept to tackle culture-based health inequalities in adult mental health services. Through staff surveys, expert consultations, lived experience insights, and a thorough review of the evidence base, the 'Change ideas' evolved into a formal QI project in August 2023.

Co-production has been at the heart of this work. Experts by Experience have shaped and guided all aspects of our project, ensuring the initiative remained rooted in lived realities. The central aim was to support clinicians in developing inclusive practices and a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances affecting the people they serve.



The Three Strands of the Project

1. Cultural Competency Resource Page

We put together a centralised digital hub housed on the Trust's intranet, providing staff with easy access to resources that support the

² Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT)

delivery of culturally competent person-centred care. This need was identified through extensive scoping, and the page was collaboratively developed with input from the QI Team, Communications Team, and a wide range of contributors including the safeguarding team, NHS talking therapies, and the community engagement team. Since going live (in the summer of 2024) the page has received 1,051 visits.

2. 'About Me' Communication Passport

A single-page, co-produced document was created that aimed to capture the service users' voice to give the clinicians a glimpse of the person beyond the diagnosis. Although originally developed to capture essential information around culture, heritage, faith, and language, we were able to modify it-based on EBE feedback- to capture other crucial information including details around protected characteristics and relevant socio-environmental factors that would help aid the delivery of culturally competent care. This passport is now integrated into the RiO system (electronic health record), making it accessible to all front-facing staff and clinicians. It is currently being live tested and will soon be available for pan-Trust use.

3. Training Modules

Two bespoke training sessions were developed:

- One for all front-facing staff in mental health settings
- One specifically for clinical staff in mental health settings

These modules introduce the concept of health inequalities, cultural humility and sensitivity in the context of person-centred care and explore practical ways to adapt clinical practices to improve experiences for service users from

racialised communities. Training has been delivered face-to-face across all Adult CMHT hubs and a mop-up session was offered to staff from other services within the adult mental health services. Training sessions were co-facilitated with Experts by Experience and the content was refined and further developed following rigorous QI methodology. Both training modules receiving good feedback in terms of content, relevance and applicability to everyday practice.



Where We Are Now

Our project had as its original remit the Adult Mental Health services (ICCR3) in the Trust but two of our QI project strands have been scaled-up for pan-Trust application: The Resource Page is fully operational and widely accessed. The 'About Me' communication passport has been authorised for use with all service users in the Trust and has been embedded into the electronic health record system. It is currently being tested prior to pan-Trust roll-out.

Our Training Modules are currently being edited and improved. Following the feedback from a focus group comprised of clinicians from speciality services/other divisions in the Trust, we are currently in the process of getting the modules authorised for pan-Trust use.

Dissemination and Recognition

Over the past year, the team has worked extensively to share this work with colleagues

³ Integrated Community Care and Recovery Service

within and outside of the Trust. We hope to publish our results in a peer-reviewed journal shortly, but in the meanwhile we are savouring the validation received by winning a GOLD at the Trust's Values Awards for Quality Improvement, Research and Innovation Awards. The project was nominated for its innovative approach to embedding research and inclusion in clinical practice.

Dr Gurmeash Kaur
Principal Clinical Psychologist
BSMHFT

- Dr Viba Pavan Kumar, for leading the project and placing cultural competency firmly on the QI map

Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you to:

- Executive Sponsor: Roisín Fallon-Williams
- ICCR Sponsor: Rose Carter
- Clinical Service Managers, Team Managers, and colleagues across all hubs who helped with the project
- IT support team & EDI team
- Core members of the QI project team: Dr Kiran Badesha, Dr Iman Hassan, Dr Heba Salem, Imad Farooq, Sunayna Batia, Hafsa Shabaz, Alyson Coupe,
- QI advisor: Kuldeep Singh
- Experts by Experience: Dr Rekha Lodhia and Audrey Deane
- Recovery for All Forum

Imminent task of Transcultural SIG to promote and enhance Cultural Competence training for Postgraduate Psychiatry Trainees

Why the study of culture and its clinical application is important in mental health training and service? Mental health and illness is a set of subjective experience and a social process and thus involves a practice of culture-congruent care. Series of anthropological, sociological and cross-cultural research has clearly demonstrated a very strong ground in favour of this contention. So all psychiatry trainees must have a cultural competence training to provide culture sensitive mental health care to their multicultural service users.

I am here providing a preliminary training protocol which may be designed in an appropriate training module for psychiatry trainee and in developing and discharging this training programme Royal College and Transcultural SIG should have active role. I am providing the subject topics in a list, which may be incorporated in appropriate didactic training programme.

Cultural Competency Training Course Module:

A. Cultural Psychiatry:

1. What is cultural psychiatry- definitions and brief history of development
2. What is culture- definitions and cultural variables
3. Clinical dimensions of cultural psychiatry

B. Cultural Competency:

1. What is Cultural Competency?
2. Cultural Competency Skill
3. Barriers in Cultural Competency
4. Cross-Cultural communication

C. Cultural Assessment & Formulation

1. Cultural Identity
2. Cultural Explanation
3. Cultural factors
4. Cultural elements between patient and clinician
5. Overall cultural assessment and integration with treatment negotiation

Dr Arabinda N Chowdhury, Executive Member, Transcultural SIG, RC

The Role of International Charity Events in Trauma Recovery and Collective Healing: A Transcultural Perspective

In the face of large-scale trauma—be it from war, displacement, or natural disaster—the mental health impact reverberates far beyond the individual. Traumatic experiences such as conflict and persecution have profound transgenerational effects, often manifesting as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and complex grief. These effects are compounded in culturally diverse populations, particularly among diaspora communities who carry the dual burden of lived or inherited trauma and cultural dislocation.



In transcultural psychiatry, we increasingly recognise that healing cannot occur in isolation. It must be embedded in community, identity, and culturally meaningful practices. Community-based responses are essential to both emotional recovery and the reconstitution of social and cultural coherence. One powerful example is the role of international charity and cultural events, which bring people together across ethnic and national boundaries to provide both practical assistance and emotional solidarity.

Recently, I had the privilege of helping to organise The International Food Festival under the banner of LOVE4ORPHANS, held at Cleethorpes Memorial Hall on 15th June 2025. This event served not only as a humanitarian fundraiser but also as a profound act of collective resilience and cultural affirmation. Attendees from multiple nationalities participated by preparing and sharing traditional dishes from their homelands—turning the venue into a tapestry of culinary heritage, communal connection, and mutual care. The event raised over £20,000, all of which went toward food and essential medical aid for Palestinians affected by the ongoing humanitarian crisis.



Events like these do more than raise funds; they restore dignity, affirm identity, and give voice to communities whose suffering is often marginalised. They provide a safe and culturally resonant space for diaspora members to grieve, to act, and to reclaim agency in the face of helplessness. In doing so, they also serve a therapeutic function—not in a clinical sense, but in the way they rekindle hope, resilience, and belonging.

From a transcultural mental health perspective, such initiatives should be recognised as valid and important expressions of communal coping. They remind us that in the face of global trauma, healing is not only the work of professionals—it is a shared human task. Whether through food, art, music, or storytelling, culturally grounded acts of solidarity have the power to transform pain into purpose and despair into action.

As mental health professionals, especially within transcultural psychiatry, we must continue to advocate for and participate in these spaces. They are vital not only for those affected abroad but also for the well-being of communities here who are deeply connected to suffering elsewhere.

Dr Saadia Alvi
Consultant General Adult and Perinatal
Psychiatrists

Future events

Transcultural Special Interest Group Annual Conference 2025, RCPsych. December 4th.

Join us at our 2025 TSIG annual conference which has been organised in collaboration with the volunteering and international psychiatry special interest group (VIPSIG).

RCPsych International Congress 2025, June 23th – 27th, Wales, UK.

The RCPsych International Congress will go back to Edinburg this year, so, we hope to see many of our TSIG friends there, so, please come and say hello at the SIG Hub.