

International Society for Affective Disorders
External Affairs Committee Meeting (Teleconference)
5pm, 26th April 2005

Present: Chris Thompson (Chair), Chris Manning, Amelia Mustapha, William Ashdown & Caroline Holebrook (Minutes)

1. Welcome

Chris welcomed the participants and thanked them for agreeing to become involved in ISAD's External Affairs Committee.

2. Background

The External Affairs Committee is a formal standing sub committee of ISAD's governing council which has been created by the Society's governing document. This reflects how vital ISAD feels it is to make a success of external relations with other organisations.

3. Working relationships with other organisations

ISAD has developed new affiliated categories of membership which include "recognised advocacy groups". It is envisaged that Fellows of ISAD will recognise and sponsor advocacy groups who would make valuable collaborators. ISAD is inviting advice from the sector about appropriate mechanisms and frameworks to allow this development.

The committee felt there was value in being a recognised affiliate of ISAD and visa versa.

The committee felt that there were a number of issues that should be dealt with in order to make the application process rigorous and robust.

- Quality Assurance
- Inclusion criteria
- Validating status

The committee felt that a clear description of the governance of an organisation was very important. Also, the official status of an organisation such as its Tax Status and Charitable Status should be clear. However, the committee recognised that not all nations have a civil structure that recognises charitable organisations as in the European and North American models. It is clear that many countries do recognise Non governmental organisations (NGO's). In these cases the committee felt it was important that an organisations principles and non commercial ethos should be considered and that it was the role of potential partners to help these groups work towards an "official" recognised status within their own country's structures.

The requirements for these kinds of organisation would be a constitution that outlines their values and ways in which they behave.

4. What are the aims and objectives for collaborative working?

The committee agreed that the over arching aim should be to develop a robust network of organisations at a global level in order to become a major influence on national governments and large organisations such as pharmaceutical companies.

The partnerships should also aim to promote awareness of the conditions and disseminate research about treatments to health workers and the public.

It was also agreed that it was vital to promote research in primary care. The need to develop a large enough voice to get this on the research agenda was identified.

From an international perspective it was agreed that sharing good practice was very useful – Projects such as “The Big Blue” - <http://www.epha.org/a/445>

The committee also felt that linking up advocacy groups with scientists and clinicians lends credibility at a national and international level. This joined up thinking would allow a very forceful voice of opinion and experience to challenge those that claim depression is not supported by an evidence base.

The development of an “International Perspective of Depression”
A description of depression based on evidence and research which is not distorted by cultural influences.

Actions:

From the discussions above it was agreed that a positive step would be to link existing local advocacy groups to ISAD’s regional representatives.

An opportunity to do this will be the first ISAD Latin American meeting to be held in Buenos Aires in August 2005.

The committee members agreed to email Caroline with any contacts they have for ISAD to approach.

The committee also agreed to email Caroline with any Pharmaceutical sponsored activities they are involved in that coincide with our aims.

5. Conference

In order to give advocacy groups a central role in our conference in Lisbon, Portugal 2006 the committee agreed with Chris’ suggestion that they might like to co-chair some of the symposia where appropriate and make presentations. One particular symposia that might lend itself to this approach is Prof Jan Scott’s “Medication adherence in mood disorders”

Free Communications and Posters would also be welcomed. ISAD will also make space available in its exhibition space for Depression Alliance and the Mood Disorders Society of Canada at no cost.

ISAD will sponsor any advocacy group speakers/co-chairs invited to attend the conference.

Advocacy groups will encourage their members and contacts to attend the conference.

There will be an open meeting of the External Affairs Committee at the conference with the aim of encouraging discussion. This is most likely to be a breakfast meeting.

The committee agreed that representatives from government agencies should be encouraged to attend. The combination of Physicians, Clinicians, and Advocacy Groups would be a very powerful lobby.

The committee suggested that a “Lisbon Declaration on Mood Disorders” based on the “Newcastle Declaration” (Now known as the “Early Psychosis Declaration”) model would be a positive step.

View the Declaration at: <http://www.rethink.org/newcastledeclaration/>

6. Any other business

Caroline will meet up with Bill in Pittsburgh in June.

Caroline will investigate an email distribution list for the group and a dedicated web page.

27/04/05 CH