

AHPP Page

Last month I was lucky enough to be funded by AHPP to attend the European Conference organised by UKCP, EAP (European Association for Psychotherapy), BAC, and EAC (European Association for Counselling). It was entitled 'A Peaceful Revolution for Health Care in Europe', and there were delegates from over 20 European Countries as well as USA and New Zealand.

The issue of war, dissolution and the restructuring of society, with its attendant ills of alienation, torture and refugees, was evident in presentations and discussions. This is reflected in the wars that have gone on between various schools and theories of psychotherapy and also between psychotherapy and counselling. The theme from all the speakers at the opening plenary was of respecting differences and not attempting to create a harmonised whole, but of trying to hold the diversity that we find — a more difficult task. It is clear that different countries in Europe have varying levels of professional structure — Britain, through UKCP and BAC, being one of the most advanced. Some countries have no umbrella organisation at all. It was also clear that the difference between counselling and psychotherapy was a peculiarly British phenomenon, the term psychotherapy covering the different activities through most of Europe. I am left wondering, therefore, why there needs to be an EAC if counselling doesn't exist as a separate identity.

I attended an extremely interesting workshop, 'Shame: Integrative Psychotherapy and Clinical Interventions'. This

was led by Richard Erskine from the USA, and three other therapists from Sweden, South Africa and UK. This was valuable to me in working with this important issue in my practice, and the research done in Sweden with children on their experience of feeling shame was both moving and instructive. There was a lively discussion on the positive aspects of shame. I feel that there is a difference between being shamed, by another — an inter-personal experience — and being ashamed, which is when we know we are betraying our true selves, an intra-personal experience.

Professional structure and ethics were discussed and here I was aware of the language differences. I was irritated with the difficulty of communication. Eventually my admiration for those many delegates who were using a foreign language throughout the conference, and my awareness of my arrogance and insularity, gave me a hard lesson in being ashamed — discussed before but now being experienced at first hand!

I learnt a lot more about the structure and organisation of UKCP, which has given me more confidence as one of the AHPP delegates to the council.

As usual one of the most important parts of the conference for me was being able to meet old and new AHPP members and to make personal contact with them, and also with delegates from overseas.

I have a full report available to members. If you would like to read it contact me on 0272 559600.

Whiz Collis