I worked in specialties such as medicine, surgery and neurosurgery. However, I seemed to miss something in my work and decided to return to psychiatry. I chose a better-equipped private psychiatric hospital this time and the result was gratifying. The job satisfaction derived was intense and I decided to become a psychiatrist.

I decided to pursue my postgraduate training in the UK as it has highly regarded training programmes. I passed the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) examination and joined a general psychiatric training scheme. Though the stigma associated with mental illness was still evident, the opportunity to receive well structured training, multidisciplinary working and research made my choice worthwhile. In this respect I would disagree with the views of the Spanish students reported in the paper by Pailhez et al, and sincerely believe that the opportunity to gain expertise in other professional areas enriches our own knowledge and is essential for providing holistic care.

The key to enrolling more medical graduates in psychiatry lies in a proper exposure to its experience of wholeness and integration in healing patients. We have to ensure that the psychiatric placements welcome students enthusiastically and give them a broad view of the human mind, emotions and behaviour, as well as introduce them to the expanding world of evidence-based treatments and empirical research. Psychiatry has one of the biggest potentials for further research, as many of our questions regarding aetiology and psychopathology are still unanswered. This gives a unique opportunity for students interested in clinical research to hone their skills, and this should be emphasised to undergraduate medical students.

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## French psychiatry

Siril read the country profile on French psychiatry in the January 2006 issue with great interest as a graduate from France with postgraduate experience in a French private psychiatric clinic.

When I was an undergraduate student we had very little exposure to clinical psychiatry. It was not a compulsory posting and was never the first choice on students' 'clerkship list'. At specialisation level, most students go into psychiatry because their ranking does not allow them to opt for the more sought-after posts in medicine and surgery.

I did a 3-month posting as medical student in a large centralised psychiatric hospital. Similar hospitals in the UK have closed down since. My supervising consultant was a surgeon who had converted to psychiatry. I enjoyed her pragmatic approach.

However, I gleaned most of my experience working at postgraduate level in a private clinic. The approach was based on experience with a psychoanalytic flavour. Rarely was ICD-10 or DSM-IV quoted. This contrasts with the evidence-based British approach.

Most French psychiatrists work in private practice, and their voluntary patients are usually admitted to private clinics. The latter are in direct competition with the *hopitaux publics*, which have an in-patient population with more severe disorders.

The legacy of French psychiatry is undisputed. But with English being the language of the scientific community, the French are suffering from the paradox that the French language has narrowed the diffusion of current French psychiatry to a Francophone auditorium.

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## College International Divisions

The executive committees of the College International Divisions are now fully functional with all officers in post as follows:

International division	Chair	Secretary	Financial officer
African	Prof. Tuviah Zabow (South Africa)	Dr Olufemi B. Olugbile (Nigeria)	Dr Frank Njenga (Kenya)
	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 24 January 2006	Elected 19 October 2005
European	Prof. George Christodoulou (Greece)	Prof. Manuel Gómez-Beneyto (Spain)	Dr Anne Lindhardt (Denmark)
	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 19 October 2005	Elected 19 October 2005
Middle Eastern	Dr Nasser Loza (Egypt)	Dr Faud Antun (Lebanon)	Dr Walid Sarhan (Jordan)
	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 24 January 2005
Pan-American	Dr Nigel Bark (USA)	Dr Oscar Meehan (Argentina)	Dr Simon Brooks (Canada)
	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 19 October 2005	Elected 19 October 2005
South Asian	Prof. S. Haroon-Ahmed (Pakistan)	Dr Nalaka Mendis (Sri Lanka)	Dr Mohammad Mullick (Bangladesh)
	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 24 January 2006
Western Pacific	Prof. Scott Henderson (Australia)	Prof. M. Parameshvara Deva (Malaysia)	Prof. Helen Fung Kum Chiu (Hong Kong)
	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 24 January 2005	Elected 19 October 2005