

## **Pre-congress Workshop**

### **EMPATHY – A CORNERSTONE IN PRACTISING PSYCHIATRY**

#### **An interactive workshop on enhancing empathic communication in the clinical interview**

**Dhushan ILLESINGHE<sup>1,2</sup>, Olga MAXWELL<sup>2</sup>, Belinda BULL<sup>1</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>NorthWestern Mental Health, <sup>2</sup>University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia*

#### **Background**

Empathy plays a vital role in a successful clinical interview. It is expressed differently across cultures and linguistic backgrounds and therefore presents a great challenge for clinicians practising in Australia. Expressed through verbal and non-verbal components, empathy has a cumulative effect on the flow of the interview. It is a complex, subtle and often contextualised concept that is more difficult to teach than, for example, structuring an interview or questioning technique. Moreover, little formal research has been done in this area and clinicians often have no systematic knowledge to turn to for guidance. Lack of empathy is often recognised as a deficit in Trainees in their clinical practice as well as in OCI and MOCI examinations.

#### **Workshop objectives**

Workshop objectives are to build awareness of empathy specific to the Australian context (i.e., body language, facial expression, use of voice and intonation, range of verbal expressions) and to develop a number of strategies for clinical practice.

It will open a forum for discussion and present an opportunity to a) better understand the concept of empathy; b) identify, enhance and share participants' individual strategies; and c) facilitate methods of incorporating empathy training in the workplace.

#### **Potential Target Group**

This workshop will present an opportunity for all practising clinicians, Registrars in training and SIMGs to enhance their ability to establish and maintain empathic communication in their clinical practice.

#### **Workshop outline**

- Conducted by a senior psychiatrist, a clinical educator and a linguist
- Introduction to empathy and identifying empathic opportunities
- Psychiatrist's and linguist's perspectives on empathy
- Targeted practice in small groups