



Annual Report of the Chair of the Association

Annual General Meeting, 8 June 2007

Much has happened over the last twelve months, both internally in terms of ACAMH's own development, as well as externally in the regulatory and charities environment. These combined, have made my last year in office very busy. Yet, looking back, there have been many memorable experiences which I, like my predecessors, shall remember with great fondness.

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the Association's 50th Anniversary celebration. This presented a unique opportunity to recapture the very earliest days of the Association days and to celebrate the "essence" of ACAMH – that collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach to child and adolescent mental health that continues to embody the Association's ethos and pervade its activities. Whilst the focus on the day was very much on commemorating the Association's achievements over the last 50 years, it was also about thanking all those who have contributed to making the Association such a success, and who have dedicated their time and energy to making the Association relevant to those working within the disciplines it embraces.

There have been many other new and exciting developments over the past two years. One in particular was the joint 3-day conference with the BABCP earlier this year. This is the first time that the two associations have joined together to host such an occasion and it proved a wonderful opportunity to draw together the skills, knowledge and experience shared by both bodies. 2007 also saw, amongst other things:

- the launch of the Association's Master Class Series
- the setting up of an Annual Bursary Fund to assist overseas members from developing countries attend one of our national conferences,
- the creation of an international fellowship to bring eminent presenters from across the world to the UK to speak at branch meetings, and finally
- the digitization of all back issues of the journal volumes.

These are significant developments that have been introduced to support members of ACAMH as well as the wider community. Such developments have only been possible as a result of the Association's sound financial performance and I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard, both in terms of systems as well as activities, to safeguard the health of our balance sheet and enable the Association to continue to optimize its resources and advance child and adolescent mental health.

It is frequently said that sound structures and systems underpin great successes and, with my term of office coinciding with publication of the Charity Commission's 2005 Statement of Recommended Practice, I have first-hand experience of this. The Board has spent considerable time over the last twelve months reviewing its internal governance arrangements to ensure they comply with the Commission's requirements and support the Association's ongoing development. Most significant have been:

- implementation of a more formal induction programme for incoming Trustees to provide them with the requisite information to optimize their role and that of the Association,
- the drafting of a socially responsible investment policy to maximize the value of the Association's assets and obtain the best rate of return whilst balancing present and future needs and minimizing exposure to risk.
- re-presentation of the annual accounts to provide significantly more meaningful information and ensure a transparent allocation of expenditure to activities

These were, undeniably, very important and necessary pieces of work, that have further strengthened ACAMH's structure and the professionalism of its systems. However, as has been the case for other small charities, the impact on staffing resources and honorary officers' time, has been immense.

It is therefore, with no hesitation, that I can say how very fortunate ACAMH is to have the officers and staff that it does - officers who work unfailingly at branch and national level to further the work of the Association and contribute to the progress of child and adolescent mental health, and staff who provide excellent and efficient support to our officers. It has been an honour to have worked with such a team and I would like to thank all for their support and commitment during my two years of office. Particular thanks must go to the Honorary Treasurer, Mike Berger, and the Academic Secretary, Orlee Udwin, who have devoted many hours of their time to ensuring that our financial situation remains healthy and that our conferences are consistently of the very highest quality. I and the Association as a whole, also owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Executive Director, Ingrid King who has devoted so much time and energy to ensure that ACAMH enters the 21st century as a progressive and highly professional organization that meets the ever increasing demands of an international charity. I am pleased to pass the Chair to Professor David Cottrell who I know will continue to work in close partnership with our Executive Director, and all the other staff and honorary officers, to safeguard this harmony and achieve the most for the Association.

Professor Patricia Howlin