

Held in Barcelona on January 19th and 20th

The 9th Psychiatry Symposium, organized by Almirall, presents the latest advances in this area

- **More than 300 specialists, from hospitals and other medical institutions throughout Spain meet at this event.**
- **The treatment of depression in the geriatric population, the causes of schizophrenia and the use of psychotropic drugs during pregnancy and breast-feeding are among the issues addressed at the symposium.**
- **Jon Sistiaga, a conflict specialist reporter, tells us about his experience as a war correspondent and “taking decisions under extreme circumstances”.**

Barcelona, 20th January, 2010 – Today is the last day of the 9th Psychiatry Symposium organized by Almirall. More than 300 specialists from all over Spain meet in Barcelona to discuss the priority issues in psychiatry in the 21st Century and to discuss and study other important matters relating to treatments and research.

According to Dr. Miquel Roca, from the Juan March Hospital in Palma de Mallorca, and a member of the scientific committee of the Symposium, *“this meeting gives us the chance to share the most recent research and the clinical experience of the experts participating, so that we can incorporate these in our routine daily clinical management”*.

“This year two issues of broad application in clinical practice are discussed: how to tackle depression in the elderly, a fast-growing population; and treatment with psychotropic drugs in special risk situations, such as pregnancy and breast feeding. Also, a world expert in schizophrenic disorders, Professor Robin Murray, discusses the current situation of research into the etiopathology of this illness”, added Dr. Roca.

Priorities in Psychiatry in the 21st Century

For the first time at this symposium, a round table has been dedicated to discussing the priorities of Psychiatry in the 21st Century, where, according to Dr. Roca *“we have both international and Spanish speakers participating at a table to decide on current priorities in healthcare and research, given the rapid advances in psychiatry in recent years”*.

Psychiatric issues in specific population groups: the elderly and pregnant women

Some of the issues addressed at this symposium focused on aspects of psychiatry associated with different population groups. This was the case of the lecture given by *Cornelius Katona*, Honorary Professor at the Department of Mental Health Sciences of University College London in his talk about **“Latest advances in the treatment of depression in the geriatric population”**. Professor Katona discussed the new treatment options for depression in the elderly, often an underdiagnosed illness which, in all its forms, can affect from 12-15% of people over 65.

According to Dr. Mikel Urretavizcaya, from the Psychiatry Unit of the University Hospital of Bellvitge and also one of the participants, *“the main advances that have taken place in the treatment of depression in the geriatric population include the adaptation of psychotropic drugs and psychological treatments used in other age groups to suit the specific characteristics of patients from 65 to 90 years old. These advances have resulted in older patients with depression achieving a more complete functional recovery”*.

On the other hand, the talk on “**Psychotropic drugs in pregnancy and breast-feeding**”, given by Salvatore Gentile, Head of the Mental Health Centre n.4, ASL. of Salerno (Italy), talked about the possibilities, risks and conditioning factors of pharmacological treatment in this population group, and other important factors such as the stigma associated with mental illness or the social integration of these women.

The participant Dr. Luis Pacheco, of the CSM Bilbao Centro considered that “*a considerable time and effort have been invested in this area over the past few years and there are increasing numbers of pregnant women in the records being treated with psychotropic drugs, who can be compared with control groups of pregnant women with the same illnesses who have not been medicated. In spite of this, we still have a long way to go in this area and must help to make the doctors and health authorities aware of the importance of recording this information systematically and regularly in all pregnant women*”.

Moreover, in the last but one talk of the Symposium, the prestigious specialist Robin Murray gave a thorough description of the causes of schizophrenia and its association with different etiological and social factors.

Jon Sistiaga: a war correspondent's testimony about taking decisions in extreme circumstances

Jon Sistiaga, the conflict specialist reporter led the debate on “*Taking decisions in extreme situations: The opinion of a war correspondent*”, in which he describes his experiences in the wars of Lebanon, Gaza or Iraq. He has investigated the world of defenders of arms in the USA, the Al Qaeda networks, the mysteries behind M-11 or the anguish of those kidnapped in Colombia.

Here, he talked about his experience in extremely hostile environments and how to make the right decision and to lead a team in life-threatening situations. “*The most important and difficult thing you have to know is where you are and the dangers and problems around you to assess the situation correctly and the consequences of your decisions, and to take the best one*”, says Sistiaga. He also discussed other subjects such as ethics and humanity in situations of war, how war can turn the most well-balanced person mad, and how to overcome post-traumatic stress syndromes after these trips.

Almirall

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