

MEDIA RELEASE

13 November 2015

AMHLD_ 32_15

LPT consultant wins national volunteering award

Leicester consultant psychiatrist Dr Mohammed Abbas has won a national award for his voluntary work to improve mental health care in war-torn countries.

Dr Abbas, who is based at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust's Bradgate mental health unit, was named the Royal College of Psychiatrists *Psychiatrist Volunteer of the Year*.



He was nominated as the driving force behind a number of international volunteering projects, particularly work in Iraq to improve mental health care quality standards*.

Dr Oliver Johnson, programme director for the King's Sierra Leone Partnership, presented him with the prestigious award by at an awards ceremony in London on Tuesday night (10 November).

It was attended by a number of influential figures in mental health, including former Downing Street communications director and mental health anti-stigma campaigner Alistair Campbell.

Judges said of "Dr Abbas: "He has been instrumental in many volunteering projects to improve standards in mental health and medical education. He has volunteered his services in Iraq both during and in the wake of conflict. The sustainability of his work provides strong evidence of its value to the host countries and is an excellent example of international volunteering."

Accepting his award Dr Abbas said: "Working on these projects left me with many rich experiences through going there and being part of a difficult situation, and by having the opportunity later to reflect on the situation from a distance with the emotions of pain, sadness but more importantly, hope."

He added: "I feel honoured to receive the award and want to thank the Royal College of Psychiatry for its commitment to international development, my colleagues at the Iraq subcommittee, LPT for allowing me the time to dedicate to these projects and, more importantly, my colleagues inside Iraq - without them no project would have happened."

- Dr. Abbas has volunteered his services in Iraq since 2007, both during and in the wake of conflict and was instrumental in the development of Iraq's first quality care standards for mental health inpatients, covering areas such as electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), rapid tranquilisation, patient records and human rights. This work is recognised as bringing about significant improvement in the use of ECT in Iraq.
- He has been closely involved in work to modernise medical schools in the country, working closely with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher Education supporting training..
- He was instrumental in introducing a new curriculum to the Iraqi Board of psychiatry and also organised – and delivered – educational training courses including 'train the trainer' sessions for both physical and mental health specialists, and supported an online CBT training course for Iraqi medics from Oxford.
- He is also the founder of an active mental health network which links Iraqi psychiatrists with colleagues abroad, particularly in the UK.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides a range of health and wellbeing services mainly for people living Leicester, Leicestershire and. Trust serves a population of 1.1million, has a budget in excess of £267 million and employs approximately 5,400 staff. More details at www.leicspart.nhs.uk

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