The Department of Behavioural Medicine’s mission is to promote excellence in research, development and teaching of psychiatry, psychology and its allied subjects and to apply and disseminate this knowledge with the aim of preventing mental disorders and developing treatment for the relief of suffering. The Department is both an academic preclinical and clinical department, responsible for teaching behavioural sciences and participates in teaching communication skills to preclinical students and psychiatry to clinical students. The Department endeavours to develop a learning culture of direct relevance to the psychiatric needs of the Omani population and develop in its students a professional, non-judgemental attitude towards psychiatric patients and society. It also provides both outpatient and inpatient services for psychiatric patients in SQU Hospital as well as liaising with other clinical departments for the provision of multidisciplinary care.

The main focus of our research interests and programme are the magnitude, culture-specific expressions and prevention of mental illnesses, which are most common among people living in Oman. The Department publishes contributions on various aspects of behavioural medicine in medical literature. Our research interests include all aspects of psychiatry, eating disorders, psychological aspects of specific physical health disorders, cognitive functions and genetics of schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bereavement, deliberate self-harm, alcohol misuse, epidemiology of mental disorders, presenting symptoms of schizophrenia, brain imaging in acute psychosis, somatic symptoms as a presenting symptoms in depression and psychiatric problems in childhood.
The Department supports the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Health and other organisations by providing its expertise in promoting mental health services in Oman and in the field of forensic psychiatry, alcohol and drug dependence problems and specialist psychotherapy services.

Staff

Faculty
Ala’Aldin Al-Hussaini, Professor
Samir Al-Adawi, Professor
Marwan Al-Sharbati, Associate Professor

Harith Ghassany, Assistant Professor
Claire Hallas, Assistant Professor
Rodger Martin, Senior Consultant
Amre El Guenedi, Consultant
Ahmed S. Amer, Senior Registrar
Hamed Al-Sinawi, Senior Registrar
Yousif A. Obeid, Senior Registrar
Aziz Al-Naamani, Registrar
Nonna Viernes, Registrar
Amaal Ambusaidi, Senior House Officer
Amira Al-Hosni, Senior House Officer
Ibrahim Elzein, Senior House Officer

Support Staff
Basma Al-Said, Mental Health Counsellor
Zena M. Al-Sharbati, Clinical Psychologist
Samira Al-Hamdan, Psychologist
Salwa Al-Redha, Psychologist
Hazar A. Al-Zadjali, Assistant Psychologist
Abdullah Al-Sulaimani, Social Worker
Ahmed Al-Salmi, Social Worker
Khamis Al-Balushi, Social Worker
Khoula Al-Wahaibi, Social Worker
Younis Al-Hashim, Social Worker
Ravindran Kozhapatil, Coordinator
Govindan Mundayadan, Coordinator

Highlights of the Year 2009-2010
The year 2009-2010 witnessed enormous growth and expansion in the Department. The psychiatric residency programme, implemented in conjunction with the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB), has also seen substantial development. In line with changes in medical education, the De-
Department join with other College departments in running the clinical communication skills course as well as coordinating with other departments in interdisciplinary activities.

The Department was involved in national and international research collaborations and published a number of papers on various aspects of behavioural medicine, psychiatry, psychology and allied fields, for example: cross-cultural differences in morbid body preference; hazardous and harming drinking patterns in Oman; medical education and child psychiatry. In the Departmental database, much research has been amassed on topics such as how distress is experienced in Oman; psychological aspects of cardio-thoracic disease and surgery; cognitive functions of schizophrenic patients; genetics of schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorders and adjustment difficulties and developmental disorders among infants, children and adolescents.

Teaching Programmes
The Department offered the following two courses: Behavioural Sciences I; Behavioural Sciences II. The number of students for each of these courses was approximately 120. A clinical attachment in psychiatry with a rotation of 8 weeks was also run. The Department participates with other departments in the College in coordinating the clinical communication skills course. The number of students was approximately 98.

UNDERGRADUATE PRECLINICAL PROGRAMME
The Department’s policy is to make learning student-centred as far as possible. Accordingly, the lectures, seminars and tutorials for preclinical students are of an interactive nature, designed to encourage participation in interactive learning. The Department conducts two inter-related courses of behavioural sciences. The first course focuses on socio-cultural roots of disease concept, doctor-patient relationship and other cultural issues relevant to the understanding of mental illness. The second concentrates on factors associated with individual differences: applied behavioural medicine as relevant to the promotion of health; clinical communication; cultural specific idioms of distress; personality and its development, and speech and language development.

UNDERGRADUATE CLINICAL PROGRAMME
The interactive, student-centred approach of the Department is adopted even more strongly for teaching clinical students. During the rotation, our medical students are encouraged to develop skills in interviewing patients and their families, interpreting diagnostic tests, planning multidisciplinary treatment, developing behavioural interventions, and administering pharmacological treatment as well as acquiring basic skills in using psychotherapeutic modalities. Students are also encouraged to participate actively in clinical case presentations of common psychiatric problems.

The main thrust of psychiatry teaching is to equip future Omani doctors with the ability to prevent, diagnose
and treat various mental illnesses in the community at large and to expose our students to empirical evidence that distress, disease and treatment are experienced in the context of cultural and social processes and also to introduce the idea of integrating mental health in primary care. The academic component includes a regular seminar in therapeutic skills of teaching and consultation; teaching on current issues in psychiatry; developmental psychology; psychological assessments; personality; bereavement; cross-cultural psychiatry; eclectic approaches to psychological intervention, and behavioural medicine. To keep abreast with the development of psychiatry elsewhere, a regular Journal Club is held. External speakers are also part and parcel of this endeavour.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW MEDICAL CURRICULUM**

The Department has been active in developing its new curriculum for the new medical degree programme. Behavioural Medicine lectures, tutorials and seminars are now fully integrated into the pre-clinical system modules of Phases 1 and 2 and the integrated modules. The Phase 3 clinical curriculum for behavioural medicine is being developed which has its primary focus within the pre-clerkship and junior clerkship training although it will be a contributing theme throughout the senior clerkship and junior internship phases. Behavioural Medicine will be contributing specific lectures, case studies and training in the pre-clerkship stage on the topics of clinical assessment (young people, working adults and older adults); vulnerability for mental health (genetic versus environmental influences); models of stress and coping, and health psychology and chronic illness management. In liaison with other College departments, teaching is provided on specific clinical communication skills (e.g. working with psychotic patients) and clinical ethics (e.g. confidentiality and suicide management). The junior clerkship stage will focus on the advanced training of medical students in

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**Statistics In & Outpatients Clinic (2008-2010)**

![Bar chart showing the number of inpatients and outpatients from 2008 to 2010.](chart.png)
the clinical application of the basic skills learned within the pre-clerkship stage giving them clinical exposure to a wide range of psychiatric conditions and their medical and psychotherapeutic treatment.

**POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME**
The Department continued in this period to train Family and Community Medicine residents and contributed to revising programmes for the examination for Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP), the Arab Board of Psychiatry and the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) residency training programme (including writing the curriculum, preparing for examinations and writing their programmes.)

**TRAINING COURSES & CME ACTIVITIES**
The Department conducted a number of workshops on various aspects of stress and coping; the psychology of chronic disease management; research methodology, and issues pertinent to social medicine.

**Clinical & Diagnostic Services**
On the hospital side, the combination of referrals from all part of Oman and prompt service delivery put the Department in the vanguard of psychiatric services in the country. The Department is one of the few in Oman which provides for specialist tertiary referrals. It has a multidisciplinary team approach designed for optimum treatment of patients and training of medical students. The Department has a support staff of psychologists, nurses, social workers and other clinicians.

A wide range of assessments and treatments including IQ and personality testing, neuropsychological tests, and various models of psychotherapy are offered. The Department also offers comprehensive liaison psychiatry with other branches of medicine as well as psychosocial intervention and various social work services. The Department offers unique clinical and diagnostic services. The assessments provided by our staff employ specialised testing procedures to integrate medical, neurological, and behavioural data with findings in order to answer any of a number of referral questions. Referrals to our services typically consist of, but are not limited to, questions concerning: a) differential diagnoses between functional and organic syndromes (e.g. depression versus dementia); b) delineation of spared and impaired cognitive functions secondary to central nervous system dysfunction; c) establishment of behavioural baseline measures to monitor recovery or progression of central nervous system dysfunction; d) comparison of pre- and post-pharmacological states, surgical, and behavioural interventions; e) assessment of cognitive/behavioural functions for the formulation of rehabilitation, management strategies, and/or educational or employment placement, and f) evaluation of neurocognitive status for the purpose of tests for disability, compensation and liability determinations in forensic cases.
Research

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Expatriate Doctors working in the Omani Health Care Sectors and Omanization

Project Code: MREC # 318; Dates: 2009
Value: Unfunded; Project Approval: Sultan Qaboos University
Investigators: Dr. Samir Al Adawi, Dept. Behavioural Medicine, SQU.

Prevalence of Anxiety & Depression among Patients with epilepsy at a tertiary care hospital in Oman

Project Code: MREC # 329; Dates: 2009
Value: Unfunded; Project Approval: Sultan Qaboos University
Investigators: Dr. Samir Al Adawi, Dept. Behavioural Medicine, SQU.

Determining the Culturally Specific Symptom Constellation of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among Omani

Project Code: MREC # 333; Dates: 2009
Value: Unfunded; Project Approval: Sultan Qaboos University
Investigators: Dr. Samir Al Adawi, Dept. Behavioural Medicine, SQU.

The Ethics of Veracity in Health Care

Project Code: MREC # 350; Dates: 2010
Value: Unfunded; Project Approval: Sultan Qaboos University
Investigators: Dr. Ahmed Amer, Dept. Behavioural Medicine, SQU.

RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKS

Journal Publications

3. Al-Adawi S, Al-Zakwani I, Obeid YA, Zaidan ZA. Neurocognitive functioning in women presenting with undifferen-


Book Chapters


CONFERENCE & SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentations

International


**National**

1. **Al-Sharbati M.** Communication skills. OMSB communication skills workshop. Muscat, Oman, 6–7 October 2009.


3. **Al-Adawi S.** Biopsychosocial approach for the management of obesity. Workshop on Food, Nutrition in Health and Disease. College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman. 10 May 2010

4. **Al-Adawi S.** Coping with chronic illness. Collaborative Nursing Conference on Deliberating Quality, Serving Communities, Nurses Leading Chronic Care. Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman, 28 April 2010.

**Poster Presentations**

**International**


**National**


6. **Al-Saadoon M, Al-Sharbati M, Rizvi S, et al.** Bullying among children in elementary schools in Muscat region. Univer-


Al-Sharbati M, Al-Attabi K. Atomoxetine in the treatment of ADHD in SQUH. University Day. Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman, 2 May 2010.

THESIS SUPERVISION

Omar Al-Farsi
Qualification: M.Sc.
Title: The prevalence of Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Oman.
Supervisor: Dr. Marwan Al-Sharbati
Date of completion: August 2010

Maha Al-Khalili
Qualification: M.Sc.
Title: Nutritional Factors in Autism
Supervisor: Dr. Marwan Al-Sharbati
Date of completion: On going

Samia Al-Fahdi
Qualification: M.Sc.
Title: The clinical correlate of autism in Oman
Supervisor: Dr. Marwan Al-Sharbati
Date of completion: On going