

Top psychiatrists meet in Cape Town

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FOR the second time on African soil and the first in South Africa, experts in psychiatry will flock to Cape Town for the 17th World Psychiatry Association International Congress which kicks off at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) today.

Under the theme Integrative Care for the Community, experts from across the globe are expected at the event. The fitting theme came into place as many South Africans have and continue to experience psychiatric problems.

The only other time the congress was hosted in Africa was in Egypt in 2005.

The major aim of the congress is to highlight the lack of psychiatrists in Africa, but will also place emphasis on illness prevention, health promotion, clinical care and rehabilitation interventions. The congress will additionally touch on the effect war has on mental health.

“South Africa comes from a rich history, but it also comes from a turbulent history and many times we forget that it has affected communities and society in a big way,” CTICC CEO Julie-May Ellingson said.

“Being awarded the bid to host the congress was important to the CTICC because it was not only about hosting experts and like-minded individuals, it was also about placing a firm spotlight

on the mental health needs of the people of South Africa and indeed Africa.

“We forget the importance of taking care of our mental health and we welcome experts in this field to exchange knowledge and shape ideas to better the lives of people.”

The CTICC will host the psychiatrists and experts in the field of psychiatry for the congress until Tuesday.

The congress would see a huge focus placed on the need for more psychiatrists among other issues affecting the sector. The president-elect of the South African Society of Psychiatrists and chairperson of the local organising committee, Bernard Janse van Rensburg, said several countries in Africa did not have associations for psychiatrists and, more importantly, lacked the number of psychiatrists to meet the needs.

“Another aim of the congress in Cape Town will be to focus on trainees and early career psychiatrists,” Janse van Rensburg said.

“With this meeting, the practice of psychiatry is set to take more decisive steps on a new course that will influence the profession for years to come.

“We are hoping to see the forging of a strong link between society and psychiatry and the Cape Town declaration which will come out of this event should see the basis of a new social contract involving all the different stakeholders in this undertaking.”

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