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## EDITORIAL

### Finding hope in challenging times

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When thinking about the subject for this editorial, we found it hard to look beyond the current context of health and care and the continuous challenges faced by those striving to develop person-centred cultures, to enable the best outcomes and experiences for all. Through our work with clinically based practitioners, we have both noticed a concerning downward turn, with increasing reports of staff fatigue and ill health, workforce shortages and frequent changes in management, all at a time of growing levels of patient need. A perfect storm!

As I (Kate) prepared a presentation recently, I found myself thinking about the story of Hans, a small boy who found a leak in a dike and used his finger to plug the hole and save his town from a potential deluge of water. This reminded me of a recent supervision session, when I used the metaphor of a dam to help someone to explore the pressure they were experiencing. What was contributing to the force of water? What, if any, were the sources of water that were in their control to divert before they reached the dam? What was the nature of the bricks the dam was built from? How could the bricks be supported and strengthened? Where could more bricks be found?

But holding back the water is not in the gift of one individual. We need to share the load and work collaboratively to understand what is important and what matters to people (patients and staff), to prioritise where we put our efforts and energy. We also need to be innovative and creative, to explore what is possible, to enable people to be the best that they can be, and to offer hope and joy at a time when it is in short supply.

And so, what is encouraging, as we share this issue of the *International Practice Development Journal* with you, are the many ways in which the authors are doing just that.

At this stage, we should declare our interest in staff wellbeing, as both of us have an article in this issue that focuses on this subject. We hope you will value these contributions to what is a wide conversation internationally, as staff sickness, recruitment and retention rates cause global concern. Kate's article, which is situated in a full-life understanding of wellbeing, recognises the importance of feeling fulfilled and feeling good. The research findings acknowledge the responsibility of the individual to engage in self-inquiry, to understand what enhances their wellbeing. But the findings also suggest that the nature of our relationships and the environments we live and work in can impact positively or negatively on our ability to nurture our wellbeing. This widens the responsibility. Caroline's article shares the development of a practical approach to engage individuals and teams in the exploration of factors that facilitate wellbeing. Caroline and her colleague co-designed a digitised resource with health and social care practitioners that enables teams to share stories of practice and embed wellbeing practices into

their everyday practice. While community nurses experiencing secondary psychological trauma were their initial motivation for this work, they also highlight contextual factors that are barriers to engaging in such a process.

Both these original papers reflect the current sea-change in attitude towards the wellbeing of health and social care workforces. They hold the promise that there are bricks that can build stronger dams and that the water can be diverted away. The papers resonate with the tenets of critical theory, which relate to raising consciousness about contextual factors at play, influencing how we think about the 'way things are' and the ways they could be different. Critical theory is concerned with working collaboratively to effect change, through enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation.

Resources developed by others in this edition include the educational programme by Irene Muller-Schoof and colleagues to prepare student nurses and healthcare assistants in the Netherlands to conduct narratives, and also the resource developed by Sonja van der Sluis and her team to prepare healthcare workers to initiate essential conversations with older people in care homes about intimacy and sexuality. These articles continue the theme of respecting personhood and listening to what is important to people; this is evident in the resources themselves, and also in their co-design with the groups whose wellbeing is perceived to be at stake.

Commitment to promoting wellbeing for all persons is demonstrated in the two articles that focus on transformational change, by Seán Paul Teeling and colleagues, and Sally Hardy. These offer hope that new ways of being and doing can emerge from challenging times, and of commitment to wellbeing and the creation of healthful cultures. Sally reports on a pilot programme to introduce legacy practitioners, with the aim of supporting the depleted workforce by imparting their wisdom and expertise. They were found to inspire safe, effective person-centred care, based on values of compassion and respect. Although Seán Paul adopted an approach to service transformation using Six Sigma, a methodology not normally associated with person-centredness, he and his colleagues drew on person-centredness as a theoretical foundation, keeping 'persons' at the heart of the systems change. Healthful relationships are a hallmark of a person-centred approach as well as the intended outcome.

Two of the ideas and influence articles focus on promoting wellbeing. Alison Kelly proposes strategies for doctoral supervisors to support candidates who are also parents or preparing for parenthood. Brianna Elise, meanwhile, draws our attention to the importance of living our espoused values through her experiences working in aged care in Australia, fuelled by her curiosity about the mismatch between policy and practice. Ruth Everington and Padmini Pai highlight their commitment to engaging in regular reflective practice through team journaling with a wellness perspective in their reflective article. Like Caroline's storytelling, the journaling offers dedicated time and commitment to strategies to foster wellbeing. Meg Kelly and colleagues identify that involvement with research when undertaking a bachelor programme can create a positive foundation to transition from practitioner to researcher.

Laying positive foundations is key to wellbeing. The importance of listening to experiences and understanding what matters to people pervades this issue of the *IPDJ*. So too does people's commitment to being the best they can and delivering the best care in ways that are innovative and person-centred, as demonstrated by Grace Cook, who shares how her learning has been enhanced through engaging with multiple intelligences. Yet these approaches may appear to be in stark contrast to the seemingly unstoppable organisational processes and structures. Culture and context transformation are therefore necessary to create the conditions for wellbeing. The scholarly work by practitioners, educators and researchers, as evidenced in this issue, does offer us hope for the future. We hope you enjoy reading it.

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