

Editorial



One of the most misunderstood dimensions of counselling in the NHS is this business of 'counselling supervision'. Despite the rise in the use of clinical supervision by our nurse colleagues over recent years, it is one of those matters on which I receive regular phone calls from NHS counsellors and NHS managers of counsellors. The very name 'supervision' implies the need for an additional tier of management; it can also suggest that somehow a counsellor is not sufficiently qualified to act autonomously, and that it must be a temporary arrangement until a certain level of competence is achieved. My discussions often include an explanation of who may be an appropriate counselling supervisor – surely a community psychiatric nurse (CPN) could do this – or maybe the manager themselves, or perhaps the GP? In the worst case scenario a counsellor is unable to achieve anything by means of numerous explanations to their manager, and they are obliged to pay for counselling supervision themselves and go to someone who does not have a contract with the NHS. All sorts of dilemmas are raised by this, and I am sad to say that they are not always satisfactorily resolved. Fortunately, the best of NHS managers consult BACP and read our guidelines once they realise that they are recommended by the Department of Health in their seminal document, *Organising and delivering psychological therapies*¹.

This issue of *HCPJ* offers interesting reading on counselling supervision. Peter Jenkins gives a good account of some of the issues involved regarding accountability, risk, ethics, and working in multidisciplinary teams. And despite my worst case scenario, good things are happening in the world of counselling supervision in the NHS, as you will see from the articles of Annas Hamilton and Shone, which describe the innovative practices of counsellors supervising graduate mental health workers and CPNs. You may also like to take more than a passing glance at the article by Carole Waskett on solution-focused supervision.

A second key theme in this issue is that of chronic fatigue syndrome. This of course is another area of great misunderstanding – not this time about function and purpose, as in counselling supervision, but about what a diagnosis means, and how sufferers might be helped. The three articles on this subject are informative and fascinating, and offer real insight.

Alongside our regular columns from John Hague and Liz Coldridge is a new series on counselling research. This is initiated by a critique from Kath Sharman of the most recent issue of BACP's *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* journal on eating disorders.

One last thought on supervision. I always make it a habit to talk of 'counselling supervision' to distinguish this from anything similar. But is this the best description – at least for those working in health care? Maybe we should adopt the term 'consultative support', as mentioned by Peter Jenkins in reference to the BACP Ethical Framework²? Somehow, whatever we call it, I am sure we will still be explaining ourselves for years to come.

References

- 1 National Institute for Mental Health (England). *Organising and delivering psychological therapies*. London: Department of Health; July 2004.
- 2 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. *Ethical framework for good practice in counselling and psychotherapy*. Rugby: BACP; 2002.

John Eatock

BACP Lead Advisor for Healthcare Counselling and Psychotherapy

31 Primary cares

NHS reform initiatives such as practice-based commissioning do not fit easily with mental health care, says John Hague

32 On the receiving end

Janet Thorn describes her experience of chronic fatigue syndrome

33 Book reviews

36 Inner-city blues: best practice in Bradford

Four years ago, the Bradford City Therapeutic Resource Team was launched. The challenge was huge but the results are encouraging



40 FHCP update

Shane Buckeridge reports on the latest developments

Healthcare surgeries with John Eatock

If you would like to talk with BACP's Lead Advisor for Healthcare, John Eatock, about healthcare counselling or a related issue, he is available in his telephone surgery on the following Mondays at 10.30am-1pm: 20 February, 13 March, 24 April, 15 May, 17 July, 18 September, 16 October, 13 November, 11 December. Call John on 0870 443 5227 and quote your BACP membership number.