

Editors of HCPJ

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- Counsellors and
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- Those who work with
counsellors and
psychotherapists in healthcare
- Those who develop policy for,
manage, refer to, or research
counselling and
psychotherapy in healthcare
- Users of services, and those
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editorial

During the first week of July, in the village where I live we had a Scarecrow Festival. This year was the best yet with hundreds of scarecrows, all made by the villagers, placed throughout the village. We had over 40,000 visitors to the village throughout the week. It was a great family occasion and our local pub did a roaring trade. Despite the warm weather making people thirsty, there was no drunkenness. By the end of the week, though, there were quite a few 'drunken' scarecrows. Some were leaning on lampposts, others were spaced out on park benches and one or two even had their heads in wheelie bins. All very funny!

Well drunks are often funny to those who don't have to live with them or experience at first hand their anger, frustration or violence. People laugh at drunks but not drug addicts. Why is this? Is it because alcohol abuse is more acceptable in society or are drunks not seen as substance abusers but only people having a good time?

Of all the substances being misused, alcohol is by far and away the most destructive to society as a whole. The concentration of policy on hard drugs such as crack cocaine, whilst understandable, gives a false impression of the relative size of the problem.

The lead theme in this July issue of HCPJ explores some of the issues around substance abuse in the context of counsellors and psychotherapists working in healthcare. The lead article by Rosie Winyard, an addictions nurse, is all about navigating this complex world. She outlines the way in which substance misusers will be managed in primary care in the coming months and years, involving shared care by counsellors and other healthcare professionals.

The theme of substance misuse is continued, although in a different way, by Richard Bryant-Jefferies, an alcohol counsellor who has worked in primary care for many years. He explains how Drug and Alcohol Services will be changed through the introduction of Models of Care by the National Treatment Agency. Richard opens up for discussion the difference between supportive counselling and therapeutic counselling. Dr Di Ackerley is a GP who specialises in the care of drug users. She believes that counsellors have the potential to do more work in this area. In an interview she acknowledges that GPs often treat the effects of misuse medically when they should be treating the underlying causes.

These articles and others reflect the changes that healthcare counsellors and psychotherapists are constantly seeing in their working environment. We are therefore continuing our theme on counsellors' terms and conditions of service with a new article on employment contracts. Some of this will be expanded on at the FHCP conference on 4 October 2003 in York – see page 24 for more information. Hope to see you there! Meanwhile, I hope you all have a good summer break and a well-earned rest.

Pat Seber

The next issue of HCPJ will be mailed out on 29 October. The special theme will be: counsellors and nurses – close together or far apart?