

Editors of HCPJ

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The targeting and distribution plan for HCPJ

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- Counsellors and psychotherapists working in a healthcare environment
- 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 who represent user's needs

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editorial

I don't know about you but I find watching gymnastics quite gripping – the co-ordination of hand and eye, the amazing balance, the show of strength, the heart-stopping moments, and the sheer magic of the whole performance.

On reading the proofs of this issue of HCPJ, with its theme of the nurse/counsellor interface, I am left feeling that I have but a small window on a world where a considerable amount of cerebral and emotional gymnastics is being performed. The juggling that takes place within every therapeutic encounter is hard enough, but here it is further complicated by the addition of other roles, understandings and even philosophical approaches. Evison describes three roles that apparently work in harmony within her person. Gaston, with her dual training, appears to me to be perhaps more in a nursing role, even though there is physical distance between herself and the team with which she works. Hamilton and Irving have written a didactic piece that includes the thought that perhaps health professionals are better off taking their counselling skills practice to a higher level than focusing on the unrealistic goal of gaining independent counsellor status.

Therein, perhaps, lies some of my unease as I consider the very worthy articles we have been able to publish. Is it the business of the counsellor or psychotherapist to encourage or to soothe the emotional sorrow (Hardy and Kell)? And what about that phrase "... counsellors have learned to start with ordinary conversations"?

The article on the couple who came for help with their sex life somehow redressed the balance for me. Carol Martin-Sperry writes that "they came for help" and here is a difference between those who are designated 'patient' and whose 'care' is being considered and those who consider that they would like to take some care for themselves. We do appreciate all that is offered to us when we are the 'patient', and yet ... when I am in the position of patient there is a sense in which my voluntariness is compromised. It is these echoes that incline me towards Kath Sharman's views in her lead article on the nurse/counsellor interface.

If these articles move you to think about these issues and deepen your understanding, all well and good. If they move you to write to us, we will publish as many letters and emails as we are able in our January issue.

The Agenda for Change material is all about the establishment of professional identity as counsellors in the NHS. FHCP's role is to inform and support all NHS counsellors and psychotherapists, so there is a wealth of tables and checklists on job evaluations in this issue. Peter Jenkins, as ever, raises some interesting questions on whistleblowing, and if you are still holding on to that nurse/counselling interface theme look in the Book Reviews, especially the review by Bernadette Broderick ... it will keep you thinking.

Looking ahead to January, email us if you want to contribute to our January debate on serious and enduring mental health difficulties – where counsellors fear to tread ... or do they?

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The next issue of HCPJ will be mailed out on 27 January. The special theme will be: serious and enduring mental health difficulties – where counsellors fear to tread ... or do they?