

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE SCOTTISH JOURNAL OF HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY

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Abstract: In the opening address of the 10th Anniversary Conference David Mitchell, retiring joint editor, reflects on the development of the journal since its inception. The content and management of the journal are explored in detail as is the international development of the journal with its world wide readership and on-line availability. The article concludes by outlining the changes and challenges for the new editorial team as they go forward into the future.

Keywords: Articles, book reviews, full-text on-line, Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy

It was a privilege to be invited to open the conference celebrating 10 years of the Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy as a former joint-editor. Not surprisingly though I am biased about the development of the journal and its increasing success.

In its inception the journal was aimed at members of the parent professional association: the Scottish Association of Chaplains in Healthcare (SACH). However, from its mission statement it is clear that it was hoped that the journal would grow and expand. Ten years on the journal is still free to SACH members and in addition there are almost one hundred additional subscribers 56 of which are libraries, hospitals and universities throughout the world. The journal is also available in full-text on-line and is increasingly being used to support academic study and research.

The success and development of the journal can be attributed to a number of factors not least of which is the active support of a representative and committed editorial board. Although a read through the editorial board members over the years demonstrates a strong influence from palliative care chaplains, strident efforts have been made to ensure a representation the four main specialist areas of healthcare chaplaincy: Acute, Mental Health, Children's and Palliative Care; and the universities. Editorial board members are working members and are regularly consulted for ideas, themes and prospective authors in addition to reviewing articles and books. The journal has also been well served

by its consulting editors who have always been supportive when approached for their help and expertise.

A clear Mission Statement

I suspect few readers will regularly consult the inside cover of the journal and be familiar with the aims of the journal. It is a tribute to the initial editor, Prof. John Swinton, and the original editorial board that they prepared a robust statement of aims that has stood the test of time and though has been reviewed from time to time remains in essence the same:

- Assist chaplains and healthcare workers in the contemporary healthcare setting
- A multidisciplinary form
- Focus on the practice of chaplaincy in Scotland and beyond
- Bring together chaplains, academics, ordained and lay people to give access to new and innovative thinking
- Explore the inter-cultural and inter-religious issues in contemporary Britain

A look through the index of Volumes 1 – 9 demonstrates how each of these areas has been covered in the journal content.

Journal content

Key to the success of any journal is its content and to survive it must be topical, readable, understandable and challenging. A host of articles have focused on aspects of chaplaincy in practice, and the changing

structures in spiritual care, religious care and chaplaincy in healthcare. Added to that have been the inter-cultural and inter-religious articles including articles from Russia, Greece, Bulgaria, Canada, Australia and the USA, and topics such as asylum seekers, Buddhism, Humanism and Janki and Bahá'í spirituality.

Significant events

A number of key topics stand out which have recorded significant events e.g. articles on organ retention, organ donation and SARS. National spiritual care initiatives have also been explored: NHS HDL 76 (2002), NHS Education for Scotland Scoping Study (2005); and national chaplaincy initiatives e.g. Agenda for Change, Standards for NHSScotland Chaplaincy Services (2007), Professional Registration. Each of these issues has had a significant impact on spiritual care and chaplaincy in Scotland over the past ten years and the journal has often clarified the debate.

Book Reviews

This aspect of the journal has changed markedly with technology, gone are the days when the editors scoured the publishers catalogues for new books of interest instead many publishers now use fax back publicity material that allows you to pick and choose new books and often receive an advance copy. The printed reviews are copied to the publishers and once in a while you recognise one of the journal reviews in a publisher's catalogue which shows they not only read them but appreciate them too.

The Orere Source

The Orere Source has been a feature of the journal since its first issue and is a much commented on resource. The abstracts are compiled by Noel Brown in Chicago and are drawn from the complete Orere Source which is the bi-monthly publication of abstracts from pastoral and healthcare literature. In addition to keeping us up to date with publications around the world Noel has been a regular contributor through his topical introductions. As more and more chaplains are finding themselves undertaking post graduate study this resource is really coming into its own.

Full text on-line

One significant development in recent years has been to make the copy from the journal available in full text on-line. It was a difficult decision: would subscriptions fall off and threaten the journal? Should the journal be offered as a members' only part of the SACH website? The decision was taken to rise to the challenge and go full text on-line with the only restriction being a 3 month embargo. This decision has proven to be a sound one, subscriptions haven't been affected and the result has been a positive one, opening the content of the journal up to readers throughout the world and in particular to students. The web master, Fred Coutts, has been an invaluable resource to the editors and has worked long and hard to make the journal website practical and easy to use.

Business management

Although the editors and editorial board receive the positive praise from readers there is no doubt that much of the success in a growing readership of the journal has been down to James Falconer the business manager. James has been a guide from the beginning, developing the cover design with the late Ruth Scott (a student suffering cancer), and liaising with the printers Rainbow who in ten years have always come in on time. Along with Sheena Pirie the subscriptions and administration are in very capable hands. Together James and Sheena have allowed the editors and editorial board to concentrate on what they do best: the content.

National Executive

The initiative, drive and enthusiasm of the SACH Executive to develop and produce a professional journal have been well rewarded. Although the Journal is the publication of SACH the managing executive have adopted 'a hands' off approach to the content and development of the journal leaving the editorial board to do their work. That being said the executive is responsible for all business decisions that have a cost implication. This has been a successful model and the relationship continues to be a supportive and cooperative one.

What could have been different?

A significant lack in the journal has been the dearth in chaplaincy and spiritual care research for publication. Although it has been increasing in recent years

it is still relatively rare. This will change as chaplaincy progresses towards professional registration and accredited education becomes more readily available and is a necessity for new chaplains being registered. Accredited education will introduce chaplains to modern research methods and encourage research projects.

Another though less significant lack has been in the 'Letters to the Editor' page. There has never been a letter. It can't be that no-one has taken issue with some of the articles published, and one or two have written articles in response to others, I suspect the main reason for the lack of letters is that the readership of the journal is more open and accepting of others opinions and understandings than the general population.

Change and challenge

The theme of the conference celebrating ten years of the Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy is Change and Challenge. In terms of changes there is no shortage to consider: Change of editors and editorial board, a continually changing healthcare agenda and a changing chaplaincy agenda. As will be seen from other articles in this conference issue there are a host of changes in the current agenda and on the horizon including: standards, competencies, registration, revision of HDL (76) 2002 or NHS Standards for Spiritual and religious care, accredited chaplaincy education and research.

As for challenge! The issues I suspect will be much as they have been: Keep pace with change, engage with the debate and continue to encourage chaplains to write. Within the wider world the challenge will be to work with the other professional organisations: the Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains, the College of Health Care Chaplains and the Chaplaincy Academic and Ac-

creditation Board, and in Europe the European Network of Healthcare Chaplains. Scotland has a lot of experience to share and to give, however, although Scotland has autonomy for its healthcare and chaplaincy services, as chaplaincy progresses as a profession there is a need to work as part of the UK as a whole and Europe.

The future

Reflecting on ten successful years of the Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy has been a rewarding and fulfilling process. There is no doubt that editorial board through sound editorial and business decisions have enabled the journal to develop and grow in its content, its readership and respect. As the journal moves on from this 10 year milestone it moves into a time of change and challenge, it moves on with its new editorial board and is well placed to embrace the changes and rise to the challenges.

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