



SACH

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Soundings

Keep Smiling!

It's usually only at the dentist that you hear the fateful words, "Wider, please." But perhaps you'll be hearing it in banks before long as customers ask for a smile from the teller that's just a little bit more generous.

A Japanese bank has employed a robotic software company to develop a system to enable managers to measure the width of employees' smiles thus ensuring the customer has had a welcoming and enjoyable experience at the public interface.

I'd love to know just how a computer can tell the difference between a Benny Hill leer and a Brad Pitt beam. We all know that a smile isn't just the involuntary parting of the lips. It involves a whole lot more, like our mood and our interest in the person in front of us. If a smile never reaches the eyes, is it really what it purports to be?

What happens in this Japanese bank if the customer is visually impaired? What other measures are in place to ensure that a welcome is made, and are they equally open to misinterpretation?

As chaplains we know very well how important it is to make the right impression with people. We may only have that one encounter with someone and we want to make sure it's right. What's the correct approach? How do we know if we're getting it right? How do we convey the efficacy of what we do to others?

I like statistics but I admit I've never been a fan of minimum data sets for spiritual care. They can measure the smile, perhaps, but can they assess the warmth in the eyes?

Knowing how important it will increasingly become to prove our worth in the healthcare world we must become smarter and bolder. Numbers of visits carried out won't wash: a five minute visit may achieve as much as another that takes an hour. Nor will recording the types of visits chaplains make do. Who makes that assessment? What I call a trauma may actually be routine to some people.



The real value of any chaplaincy visit (is that the right term, too loose, too casual?) is what goes on behind the facial expression. The human contact: the listening, the exploring, the sharing. These are things that won't easily fit into data crunching computers.

It's up to us then, to find out how valuable or otherwise the service we provide to people is

perceived to be. We all know that we do a good job and people benefit greatly from our interventions. But we need more than anecdotes to satisfy the powers that be. Why not sign up for Harriet Mowat's collaborative research project? It will provide you with transferable skills and provide some of the much needed data I've been talking about.

So remember as you keep looking at your standards and competencies, PDP, registering with UKBHC, and signing on for research, to keep smiling! As the Cheshire Cat will testify, it's the thing that fades from people's memories last. It's got to be worth doing, however you measure it.

Derek Brown
President of SACH

Notes from the last Executive Meeting Held in Dunblane on 3 March

Future of SACH

There was lengthy discussion about the future role of SACH in the light of regular education and training opportunities now offered by NES, which previously came under the remit of SACH. Currently two members of the SACH Executive retain links with Europe and the USA and the Journal has widespread readership. It was suggested that SACH *Soundings* could hold information on professional registration, CPD points and portfolios and AfC transitions. SACH does not directly inform Health Boards as this is the job of the UKBHC but SACH could still be a source for advice by using *Soundings* as a clearing board. UKBHC could be asked to set up a website for informative conversation.

Spiritual Care Committees

Discussion took place surrounding the varied roles of Spiritual Care Committees across Scotland, from those which seldom meet to those which are very supportive. It was noted that recommendations from the recent CEL would be more likely to be implemented if proposed by the Committees. Shared information on such issues might also be made available in SACH *Soundings*.

USA Link

Derek Brown gave an update on his recent visit to Orlando to speak on chaplaincy standards

and competences. Networking had been fruitful as the information contained in these documents had been shared. Derek was asked to comment on US standards and noted US interest in the new course in healthcare chaplaincy at Glasgow University.

Training Fund

It was agreed that Margery Collin should receive travel and accommodation expenses from the training fund for the ECPC Conference in Belgium in August at which she agreed to promote the work of Scottish chaplaincy, particularly the SACH journal.

New Spiritual Care Adviser

It was agreed to invite Ewan Kelly to attend the next SACH Executive meeting.

Retiral

In order to mark the retiral of Chris Levison and to thank him for his valued input to the development of healthcare chaplaincy over many years the Executive invited Chris to share lunch after the meeting and presented him with an inscribed glass ornament on behalf of SACH.

The next meeting of the SACH Executive will take place on Tuesday May 12th 2009 at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane.

Scratchings from the TDO

This will be my final "scratching" for *Soundings* and it will be brief. I retire in less than two weeks and am looking forward to it. However I must say how much I have enjoyed working with you all over the last 8 or so years as Training and Development Officer. Working now within NES as Programme Director has, I believe, helped the perception of healthcare chaplaincy as a genuine healthcare profession.

Working with chaplains, Health Boards, Spiritual Care Committees and the many characters, managers, faith communities and belief groups has been, well, a gas!

Conferences and study days are behind me, my KSF outline will gradually fade. Except that I will be kept on a 30 day per year contract in the meantime and so will not be entirely out of the picture.

My thanks to you for your

friendship and support through the years. A special thanks to the SACH Executive for their generosity and sharing a lunch with them the other day. I have many memories to cherish.

I wish you all well in your work and Ewan Kelly as he continues it from this seat.

Take good care of him, yourselves and the charges under your care.

Your friend and colleague

Chris Levison

“Just talking to folk”

I have a friend who sometimes still manages to wind me up by saying that I have an easy job just blethering with folk. Why does it get to me? Probably because there is truth in it. Going back over 23 years of parish ministry, with 15 of these years being a part time hospital chaplain, I have at times been frustrated by the fact that a lot of conversations people have with me are quite superficial.

One escape route from the frustration of many superficial conversations is to develop counselling skills, to become a counsellor even. But therein also lies a temptation. When I trained as a counsellor some years ago, I subsequently wanted to turn every pastoral encounter into a counselling session. It was around that time that I read an article in “Contact” by George Gammack called “The Ministry of Messy Moments”.

George knew all about the therapeutic hour and the comfortable surroundings. But he found that most of his contacts in the parish ministry were not like that. Somebody would meet him in the supermarket and start to tell him something. 10 minutes later they were moving away. George described these encounters as messy moments when the window was open and you had your chance to be helpful.

As part of my own ongoing development I am doing training in faith accompaniment with the Glasgow Ignatian Spirituality Centre. A recent presentation by Alison Moody, one of the team, on something with a truly quaint title, “Spiritual Conversation” made

meaningful connections with me. Just as George Gammack’s article affirmed the worth and value of all these short conversations that we have, so also did the presentation on Spiritual Conversation.

It also affirmed the experience I have as a hospital chaplain going round the wards where I begin a conversation gently, respecting the patient’s right to be visited or not visited. Sometimes, indeed often, a conversation stays at a small talk or fairly light level.

But then listen to this quote from Alison’s presentation. “Sometimes a conversation can dip, or jump, such that a fresh dimension of life emerges. The conversation now seems to have a God, or a spiritual, dimension. There is concern over meaning, values, ultimacy, worthwhileness, significant experiences, how I negotiate a good way through life?”

During any given day we experience a whole range of conversations at all kinds of levels.

Listen some more, “This shift may happen and this dimension may emerge for reasons we can’t pin down; perhaps because of the quality of the listening, or because of the desires or needs of those involved, or because a good invitation is sensed.”

In order for us to be available to people when they want or need to go deeper, we also have to be available to them when they just want to keep it safe and on the surface. We should not despise conversations which remain on the surface, and should not feel inadequate or useless, when we have a day

or a time when no conversations go deeper.

Towards the end of the presentation, there was a list of some things that spiritual conversation had in common with faith accompaniment or spiritual direction, and as I listened, I recognised qualities that are also very much at the heart of spiritual care. Here is the list.

- Being able to stay with a person at the heart of their experience – their desire, hope, fear, anger, distress and joy.
- Being able to help people be aware of and articulate what is happening in their lives
- Attending to the holy, that is, listening for the divine at the heart of a person’s experience and pausing when the holy is disclosed
- Listening for a person’s desire, for their energy, for where there is hopeful movement
- In all this, helping a person to explore what is happening and what invitations are gathering weight

I really love this final quote. “To help people articulate their deepest and truest desire is an exercise in creative liberation.”

So, next time my boring smart Alec friend says that I have a great job just blethering with folk, I will say “Absolutely, and you know what I am doing – I am helping them to articulate their deepest and truest desires and that is nothing less than an exercise in creative liberation!!!”

Ken Russell
Chaplain
Stirling Royal Infirmary

How about writing an article for the Journal?

The Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy is now in its twelfth year and continues to publish articles related to Chaplaincy and the provision of spiritual and religious care within healthcare. While the editors usually have a good selection of material to publish in each edition, they would encourage people with something to write to give it a go. Details of preferred article lengths and of how to submit a paper are on the back page of each of the Journals. The review process is gentle and encouraging, recognizing that it is in everyone's interest to publish current thinking in this area for the use and benefit of the service we seek to deliver.

In particular, we would be interested to hear from anyone who has audited the service, or who has done a piece of action research around chaplaincy or spiritual care. Equally, if you have attended a conference lately and been impressed by a particular presentation, please let us know and we could try to make contact with a view to asking for an article to be submitted.

Perhaps you know you have something to say, but are just wondering how to get thoughts on paper. Give us a call and we can talk about that too.

Iain Macritchie and Janet Foggie (Joint Editors)

A note from Ewan

A note to say a general hello as I embark on a new adventure! As we all know it is an exciting but challenging time to be in healthcare chaplaincy.

Chris has done a fantastic job in relation to the ongoing integration of chaplaincy and spiritual care in general into mainstream holistic healthcare in Scotland. In this respect his work at a strategic and national level has complemented your work together with your teams in your local contexts.

The profile of spiritual care and healthcare chaplaincy in the Scottish NHS has never been higher. There is an energy and momentum around at present. The latest NES project under Chris's guidance, the educational document 'Spiritual Care Matters' will be winging its way to healthcare and tertiary educational establishments all over the country in the next few weeks. The first tranche of participants will begin the Certificate in Healthcare Chaplaincy at the University of Glasgow this autumn. I hope to continue to build on what Chris has initiated and work in a similar collaborative fashion. In the next few months I hope to be able to meet with you and as many of your team as possible in your place of work and attend as many Spiritual Care

Committees or equivalents in different Health Boards as possible. I am very keen to learn from yourselves what the key issues are for you as lead chaplains in the different aspects of healthcare at present. I want to hear about good practice (and be able to facilitate the sharing of that), audit and research that you have been doing, concerns and difficulties you are facing, training and professional and personal development needs you and your team have and anything else that is relevant to you and your work, to you and your colleagues.

For me it will be to continue and renew old friendships and acquaintances and make new ones. If I can be of any help, in any way, to yourself or your team, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best regards,

Ewan Kelly

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www.sach.org.uk/news.htm

If you would like to receive the colour version of SACH Soundings by e-mail in Acrobat PDF Format, send your e-mail address to: **Fred.Coutts@sach.org.uk**

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Send news, articles, stories, pictures and ideas by end of May to:

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