

When this journal first began life, it was called the *Journal of Mental Health Promotion*. It is interesting to see Keeling and MacQuarrie in this issue find that “developing creativity” proved a key theme in their model of mental health promotion. Imaginative, creative ways of working are a sign of “emancipatory” health promotion, i.e., working with others to liberate minds that have been stuck in old and helpless ruts.

This week Britain’s National Health Service celebrated 70 years since its founding during Clement Attlee’s postwar Government. In a broadcast to mark that anniversary a past president of the Faculty of Public Health, John Ashton (2018), explained how, in the history of UK health planning, resources for illness prevention kept being diverted into hospital budgets. Prevention of illness was always intended to be one function of the national service, but that function was never fully realized nor resourced. In England since 2013, the prevention responsibility has fallen on local government, whose resources then dwindled and dwindled. As a nation, Scotland has not made the same mistake, and its new “public health priorities” include innovative solutions for mental wellbeing (Christie, 2018).

Preventing or at least delaying the development of dementia in older age is one of the major health challenges facing our world. The Alzheimer’s Society (2017) recommends exercising your mind by activities like creative writing. In general, Jensen and Bonde (2018) have reviewed arts interventions for mental health. The subjective effects reported were feelings of:

[...] increased self-confidence and wellbeing, being part of a community, building new social relationships, participating in meaningful activities, creating a connection between body and mind, promoting relaxation, fostering a sense of hope and developing new coping mechanisms and experiencing increased sense of self-worth, motivation and aspiration and decreased levels of depression.

Richardson *et al.* in this issue describe a nature-based programme “30 Days Wild”. That programme inspired participants to try many new activities, including “Artistic activities such as sketching, writing a poem, taking photographs, making a piece of art from wild materials”. The most cited paper in this journal has been by Burls (2007), which included people creating a wildlife garden and then installing personal works of art within it. Recently a randomised controlled trial of a nature-based therapy from Denmark has been published (Stigsdotter *et al.*, 2018). Unlike the “ecotherapy” described Ambra Burls in England, the disciplined Danish version focussed more on structured gardening rather than on creativity or spontaneity – but service users were expected to use the trees and shrubs planted in the garden for “reflection”.

Former Community Health Minister Paul Burstow gave an address at the HealthPlusCare conference (27 June 2018) entitled “A Life, Not a Service: How TEC can unlock the potential of population health”. Understanding mental illness and mental wellbeing along the lifecourse is a powerful aid to planning mental health promotion. Knapp *et al.* (2011) made a powerful economic case for mental health promotion at the time the strategy “No health without mental health” was under development. Many benefits of investing in health promotion arise sometime after the interventions used, as life unfolds.

There are clear lessons here for wellbeing initiatives during a long career. Healthcare professionals need resilience to manage their occupational stress. Almost 30 years ago I developed lectures and a support group for first-year medical undergraduates, so it is sad to read in the latest issue of the *BMJ* that medical students today are not observing professional “self-care” by their teachers “nor are they specifically learning to foster their own wellbeing”

(Peters *et al.*, 2018). This is not just a matter for young people – in relation to ageing Americans, the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion has been promoting resiliency and optimism through improved social connections (Kobau *et al.*, 2011).

Imagination and the creation of novel research networks will be needed “to tackle the next generation of health challenges” over the coming five years (Department of Health and Social Care, 2018). The challenges that are over the horizon now, include better help in the future for populations with “mental health issues”. As it happens, next week our publisher, Emerald, have asked me to give a talk on:

- “Needs, challenges and opportunities for interdisciplinary research”

You did it Your Way

Sinatra sang about doing it My Way,
But *your way* will be different
And the route map owned by you.
Imagination brings thinking true Freedom:
Creative steps are personal
And make healthy, fertile minds.

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