

Basw Renal Special Interest Group AGM

Sunday 21st June 2009

Chairpersons Report

It is hard to believe that another year has flown by and we are back again ,by popular request, in the lovely city of Edinburgh. I think that this has been a very busy and productive year for the group, and I will try to summarise some of the main events and achievements.

In June 08 we held our 6th Annual Study Day entitled ‘ Supporting People on Home Therapies’, a fascinating mix of patient and carer experiences, and expert professional input. I hope that all who attended found it helpful and inspiring, and I would like to thank Julie, Caron, Janey and Ann for all the hard work undertaken. This group should be very proud of our record of self- education, as there has always been active interest in furthering our knowledge, via the group. The last 6 years however, have been exceptional, as we have covered topics such as Concordance, Research for social workers, Helping young patients with serious illness, Palliative Care and conservative management, Transplantation issues, and Home Therapies. Tomorrow the Study group have prepared a programme on ‘Providing psycho-social support in a multi-disciplinary setting - and strategies for coping as a renal social worker’, all of which no doubt will raise issues and debate. My thanks to all who have helped to make this possible, and to the Elizabeth Ward Scholarship Fund, that has supported us financially, and opened up so many learning opportunities for our group members.

October 2008 saw us in York, with a good attendance of 29 members. After a busy and wide ranging agenda in the morning, we welcomed Rosemary Macri CEO of the British Kidney Patients Association. Rosemary was able to update us on the developments of the organisation, its modernisation, and her hopes for the work the BKPA would be able to do in the future. This strengthened the bond that the group has with the BKPA.

This was followed by a short presentation by Wendy Ashton, who shared her work with us on the development of a Transplant Support Group in a rural area.

We met at the London Union again in January 2009, with yet another ever - lengthening business agenda. This was followed by a presentation by Lisa Robertson on her MSc dissertation ‘ Carers experience of the Renal Multi-disciplinary Team, in relation to caring for a Haemodialysis patient’ . This was very well received, and Lisa congratulated on her excellent MSc results, and having presented at the Scottish Renal Association meeting.

The thrice yearly meetings and Study Day are the framework of the groups activities, and need to remain attractive and relevant. At this point I would like to offer my thanks to all the officers of the group for their hard work, support and commitment, in keeping the wheels rolling year on year! Heidi has been our secretary for the past 3 years, and someone I greatly depend on. Ann has been our Treasurer

for the past year, and is now going to retire with our thanks and warmest wishes for the future. Ruth ably mans the membership office, keeping track of all the essential detail and memberships contacts. All important offices that keep the group functioning, so please give some thought to getting involved too!

This year has also seen a meeting of the Paediatric social work group in Birmingham, and the Welsh renal social work group in LlandrindodWells.

Our various representatives have been busy too, Jenny Latchford with the British Renal Society, Wendy Ashton with Kidney Research UK, and Cathy Holman, who has helped to re-forge our link with the changing structure of the EDTNA/ERCA. This year for the first time we have also been asked to consider a Trustee position with the British Kidney Patients Association. Mary Braybrooke has represented us at a BASW meeting, and I am also aware of the work done by Cathy, and Janey in relation to the National Kidney Federation, and those who representated us at last years NKF Patients Conference.

Our thanks too, to Maria DaSilvaGane, who is busy pursuing her MSc ,but has also found the time to work with the Department of Health in improving the provision of services in End of Life Care, as well as planning a further 3 year research project.

The list of members who have contributed by submitting Abstracts, contributing to books, writing articles, and presenting at conferences is impressive, and too long to mention, but thanks to all of you, who have found the time, motivation and passion to take on such tasks.

It is not only, however, those who 'shine 'at the more academic tasks who represent us. Every one of this group who toils in the workplace to adhere to our Mission Statement and National Job Description, flies the flag for renal social work. We all endeavour to present a professional approach in the interests of good services for patients and their families. Sometimes it is hard in these difficult times of financial restraint and scare resources, and the recent criticisms levelled at the social work profession throughout this last year. So it is good to have the support of our group.

One of the newer phenomenon, is the rising interest in our website. This continues to attract interest from renal social workers world-wide, and some of you may have noticed that we have added a Visitors Section recently. It also acts as a reference point for renal organisations, and I am pleased to report that we have had requests this year for 3 articles on renal social work, The BKPA, the Polycystic Kidney Disease Charity and Community Care.

A piece of work that has been bothering me for some time, The Renal Social Work UK Audit 07 was finally completed, and presented at the British Renal Society Conference last year by Julie Daniels, and circulated as a document this year. Responses have been slow, but I can report that the BRS , the Renal Association, our Renal Czar, Donal O'Donoghue, the National Kidney Federation, and the Department of Health Social Care Taskforce have all had copies. As you know this is an issue close to my heart, and I will continue to raise the issue of shortfall in renal social work where ever I can. I am indebted to Cathy Holman for her article published in the RCN Nephrology News, which makes an impassioned plea for better provision.

My first attendance at a renal social work meeting was in London 20 years ago, and I recently found the agenda. Not surprisingly much of the content was similar to the AGM today - if shorter ! Links with other renal organisations, concerns for those needing help on Home Haemodialysis, transport costs and poor access to disability benefits, encouragement to write articles and give presentations. It struck me that, our needs, and those of the patients and families we work with have changed little. What has changed is the background against which we strive to promote social work values and professional practice, in an increasingly, bureaucratic employment scenario and against a tide of rising need. The change in role of social work from traditional casework to care-management in the last 20 years has been progressive, and become the modus operandi of many social work organisations. For those of us who work in a health care setting, our traditional, holistic approach has sometimes been criticised and marginalised, but I sense a change in the wind- social work of the future will need to be better integrated multi-professionally, more flexible and holistic.

The values and skills of a group such as ours have endured, have even flourished, and continue to provide a relevant service to the client group we work with. It is important that we continue to promote our ideals of good practice at every professional opportunity.

We have a great deal to be proud of, and here in Edinburgh it seems appropriate to quote the words of a very special former Chair of the group- Richard Dingwall, who said ‘ Things are going well but we cannot sit back- you are all busy people - but busy people get things done!’

Thank you all for all that you do, and for being here this evening.

**Chris Pritchard
BASW Renal SIG Chair
June 2009**