

BASW Renal Social Work Group AGM 2008

Chairpersons Report Sunday 15th June 2008

This is our fifth AGM in the delightful city of Edinburgh, and my first report as the Chair. This year has really flown, and has been so busy, that I now fully understand my predecessor, Cathy Holman's comment, that this feels like two jobs! I will try to sum up briefly what this year has been like for our group.

The year started on a very good note with our annual Study Day in Edinburgh. For those of you who missed this day, the topic was Transplantation, and we had some excellent speakers; Dr. Evan Harris MP, Dr James Powell from the Royal Edinburgh Infirmary, Mr. Ray Mackay, transplant patient and representative of the National Kidney Federation, and Ann Marsden, Transplant Coordinator, and her colleague, Gill Fitzgibbon, Consultant Psychologist, from Cardiff. For the first time we had a Panel format in the afternoon, and it was a very informative and worthwhile event. My thanks to the Study Day group, Janey Atha, Jenny Latchford, and Ruth Crowther, for all their hard work in putting this together. I hope it has wetted your appetites for tomorrow's Study Day on 'Developing the social work role within Home Therapy'.

October saw us in York, where we had a very full business meeting, followed by a presentation of the collected data for our workforce Audit, presented by Julie Daniels, to which I will refer to later. The topic of Continuous Health Care funding was also raised, but given changes in the current approach to these issues, it was decided to defer any further discussion until later this year.

London in January saw us once again in the Union of London University, with a well attended meeting. Despite the lack of technical equipment (and the exorbitant cost of hiring it!) Janey, Ruth and Jenny gave us a very good presentation of their work in putting together the previous Study Day, that they had presented at the Florence European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association conference in September 07.

At this point I would especially like to thank the officers of the group for all their hard work in making these meetings run smoothly. Heidi Steward for her great secretarial support, and mastery of the technical bits, Ruth Crowther for overseeing our membership, and not least, the indefatigable Jo Fearn, who wishes to relinquish the Treasurer's post after 4 years, for the second time in office!

My thanks also to Ann Murdoch and the Edinburgh team, for helping with all the practical arrangements of our visit to Edinburgh, and to Cathy and Jenny for their assistance in York.

Also, in advance, the members of the 2008 Study Day group, Caron Jones, Julie Hallet, Ann Murdoch, and Janey Atha, who I am sure will produce an excellent day tomorrow.

A whole is only as good as the sum of its parts, and one of the pleasures of working and belonging to this group, is the enthusiasm and willingness of members to take on roles and tasks, and to represent the group in both the adult and paediatric services. This year has seen some changes that I would like to mention.

Firstly, I would like to thank Cathy, our former Chair, for her invaluable support this year. Rather than taking a well deserved break, Cathy has continued to tend our website, keep our posters and

leaflets flowing, and updated, and find time to mark, submit and present abstracts at conferences. Thanks too, to Julie Daniels for her representation of us on the British Renal Society Council, which ended in May. Following her work with our UK wide Audit, which she presented at the BRS Conference recently, Julie will carry on representing us on workforce matters. Our new BRS Council representative will be Jenny Latchford. Also, I am grateful to Wendy Ashton for taking over a role from me, and agreeing to be our representative on the Kidney Research UK, Patients Grants Committee.

Margaret Mitchell has continued to express her interest, in working with the EDTNA, but we have made little progress in clarifying this role to date, and more needs to be done, hopefully at the Presidents meeting, at the Prague EDTNA in September.

I would also like to thank Lisa Robertson for her work on the Renal Social Work Induction pack, and for helping with the documentation required for the Elizabeth Ward Scholarship Fund.

Thanks too, to all of you who attended conferences this year, the BRS, the EDTNA, the EWOPA, and the NKF.

Finally, I must mention the continued work done by Maria da Silva Gane with the BRS Research group, and her encouragement of other social workers to involve themselves in research. Due to her expertise, Maria has also been asked to be involved with the Department of Health Steering Group for End of Life Care. It is very satisfying to know that members of our group are able to make such a significant contribution to renal services.

It takes a lot of stamina, positive thinking, confidence, time and organization, to arrange meetings and Study days, to man stands at conferences, chair meetings and represent us with other organizations, mark, and sometimes submit abstracts, present work to multi-professional colleagues, and 'fly the flag' so ably for renal social work. If I have forgotten to mention anyone by name I apologize, but thanks to you all, who have participated this year in every way.

One event that I feel I must draw attention to, with a sense of sadness, is the decision of Mrs. Elizabeth Ward to withdraw from active participation in the British Kidney Patients Association, as its President. Mrs. Ward has long been a staunch supporter of renal social work, and without her generosity and encouragement over many years, members would not have achieved so much, or the group flourished so well.

We have expressed our thanks to Elizabeth, and wished her a well- deserved retirement, assuring her that this group will continue to support the patients and families that she cares about so much.

With significant changes in the BKPA, the officers of our group were invited to meet with Rosemary Macri, Chief Executive, in London in April, and forged, what we hope will be a strong continuing bond of cooperation, with BKPA for the future.

It is good to report that a major piece of work on behalf of the group has been completed this year. Julie Daniels, with some help from her colleague Dr Mike Delaney, Pauline Ross and I, was able to collate the data from the UK renal social work Audit 2007, and present it at the Glasgow BRS conference in May, on behalf of the group.

I am very grateful to Julie for all her efforts on our behalf- well done. We are the only profession to have completed this to date, and I am proud that we now have robust data on our workforce status. It remains to complete this, as a published document (my summer task I think !) and use it to further our aims as a group, in providing better service provision.

Our website, although somewhat under-used by members (!), and due for an extension to include information on charitable sources, and some of our Study Day activities, does seem to attract the attention of those far and wide. Requests for information and contact with our group have come from as far afield as Dublin and New Zealand ! By far the most amusing however, was an e-mail from a Senior Social Services manager, who shall remain nameless, who deigned to suggest that our job description was out-dated, and should be reviewed, or removed from our website ! My reply was largely unprintable, but he needed to be forcefully reminded that 'statutory care management' is not the only function of social work, and that we offer a comprehensive service to meet the real needs of many patients, carers and their families.....

I am very proud to belong to this group, and privileged to be its Chair. Last week I had an e-mail from a member, Brianna Strumm, who is moving on to pastures new in Canada, and wanted to express her thanks for all the support, knowledge shared, and sense of belonging, that being part of this group has meant to her. That echoes my sentiments entirely, and although as a small, specialist group, our path is often difficult, our striving to bring a professional social work perspective to important areas of health care, is a worthwhile effort. To all of you, who work so diligently to help renal patients and their families, please be proud of what you do, and help this group to support each other, and promote our work for existing clients, and those in the future.

I am sorry you will have to forgo a poem this year. I don't have Cathy's repertoire for verse, but I will offer you one of my favourite quotations - perhaps very apposite one for this very active group....

'Life is what happens, while you are busy making plans' John Lennon

Thank you all

Chris Pritchard

Chair BASW Renal Special Interest Group

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