

BASW Renal Social Work Group AGM 2007

Chair Person's speech Sunday 17th June 2007

It is really lovely to be here in Edinburgh for our 2007 AGM. This is my last meeting as your chair and it has been a great privilege to be the chairperson for the BASW Renal Special Interest Group over the past 3 years.

So what has the past year been like for our group?

Our study day in 2006 was a great success and that is due to all the hard work put in by our Study Day Group – Janie Atha, Jenny Latchford, Ruth Crowther and as always the Edinburgh Team who help with the venue. The topic for the day, for those of you who were not there or for those of you perhaps like me find it hard to recollect what happened last week never mind last year, was Conservative Management of Renal Failure. John Sedgwick from the University of Teeside talked in the morning about research findings and in the afternoon we had presentations from Maria Da Silva Gane, Julie Daniels and Maggie Higginbotham (nurse from York) with myself.

In October in York we had hot off the press our Renal Social Work Leaflets, which I think are good, but then I would because I did them. I do however know for sure that they are a valuable asset at our Social Work Stand during conferences.

We also managed to finalise our Group's Constitution, which really felt like a good job to have completed – after all we had been looking for it or missing it, since I first attended the group 8 or more years ago!

January saw us in London in a great new venue discovered by our new secretary, Heidi Steward. We had guest speakers Elaine Davis and Zeben Misa from Kidney Research UK, attend this meeting, telling us all about the re-branding of the National Kidney Research Fund into the new Kidney Research UK and the growth of their Patient Grant Scheme.

The meetings and study days are important for our group but a lot of work is done outside these:

- We have had stands at the BRS and the NKF conference manned by social workers highlighting the value of renal social work and encouraging renal teams, patients and their families to work towards all units having renal S/W input.

- Chris Pritchard has been part of the Kidney Research UK patient grant body, helping administer grants
- Chris Pritchard and Julie Daniels have been working hard to get us our audit data on renal S/work posts in the UK, which we badly need
- Julie Daniels has represented us on the British Renal Society Council. This involves a lot of work and input and we are grateful for her time and effort in this post.

Individually members have contributed to the increasing social work presence in a medically dominated world by marking abstracts for BRS and EDTNA, presenting at conferences undertaking research and through their tireless work with renal patients and their families. This is often done in difficult work situations with sometimes little support from Local Authorities. I would like to thank all those involved in the work of the group especially the officers – Anne Murdoch our membership secretary, Jo Fearn our treasurer and Heidi Steward our secretary. Our study group members have been working away all year to produce tomorrow's event on Transplantation and I would like to thank Jane, Jenny and Ruth again plus the latest addition to that group, Chris Pritchard. I apologise to anyone I should have thanked by name but have not done so.

Before moving on to my final section I want to pause to thank Ann Murdoch as she steps down from her post and I would like to present a small token of our appreciation of all the work Ann has done over the years for the group and in particular the past three years as membership secretary.

I believe the BASW Renal Special Interest Group is a fantastic organisation, both in the support it can give to renal social workers and also in the work it does to promote social work and its values in the renal field. Once we complete our audit, I think the challenge for the group over the next few years is to look at ways to increase the numbers of health funded renal social work posts in the UK. In the words of Alan Watson, paediatric nephrologist in Nottingham “we need to shame these adult nephrologists into having social workers in every unit instead of them just talking about psychosocial care”. I think with the help of the British Renal Society and a lot of energy from this group we can begin to tackle this huge problem.

As I talk about the future of the group I feel I can do this in complete confidence as I have received at least one nomination for the post of chair. Without social workers coming forward to fill the officers posts within our group we could not continue to function.

I would like to close with my wishes for you all and our group in the form of a poem. I apologise to those of you who know this poem very well but my sentiments are true.

Sometimes

Sometimes things don't go, after all,
from bad to worse. Some years, muscadel
faces down the frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail,
sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.

A people sometimes will step back from war;
elect an honest man; decide they care
enough that they can't leave some stranger poor.
some men become what they were born for.

Sometimes our best efforts do not go
amiss; sometimes we do as we mean to.
The sun will sometimes melt a frozen field of sorrow
that seemed hard frozen: may it happen for you

Sheenagh Pugh (b. 1950)