

...with Carole Allan

President of the British Psychological Society, 2011–2012

One achievement during my year as president

I was pleased to represent the views of BPS members on the Health and Social Care Bill. I have heard my American Psychological Association counterpart Carol Goodheart say that in the USA, the Healthcare Industry based on a competitive model consumes nearly 16 per cent of GDP without providing universal coverage, especially for the most vulnerable. In the UK we spend 8 per cent of GDP and this provides cradle to grave coverage for 60 million citizens.

Throughout the debate on the Bill, the Society has argued integrated care, based on stronger collaboration amongst professionals and better co-ordination between services, offers the most promising approach to improving patient care and meeting the key future challenges facing the NHS—demographic changes in the form of an ageing population and supporting the increasing number of people with long term physical and psychological conditions.

One highpoint of my career

I have not planned my career, which has been spent in the NHS, in any systematic way:

things have come up and it seemed a good idea to have a go. I feel privileged to have had such a variety of jobs and opportunities. I have mostly worked within the field of adult mental health, also within alcohol and drug services. This was followed by a post as Clinical Director for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Glasgow. More recently I have had a series of NHS management jobs within the West of Scotland but have managed to combine this with clinical work. I particularly enjoyed working within occupational health. The NHS is one of the largest employers in the world, only beaten by the Chinese Red Army and Wal-mart, and NHS staff are a great group to provide services for.

One book that all psychologists should read

I first became interested in how research could support and help develop the work of practitioners when I worked in the alcohol and drug field. I found the work of Jim Orford and Griffith Edwards helped me in my approach to clients, in particular their

monograph 'Alcoholism: a comparison of treatment and advice, with a study of the influence of marriage' (1977). I was very pleased when Jim Orford was recently honoured by the BPS for his contributions to psychology. I



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also found the work of Nick Heather inspirational. He was a pioneer of early intervention into alcohol problems, developing some very practical applications based on sound evidence.

One thing I would change about psychology

I am impatient with the way

we divide ourselves into ever smaller sub-specialisms, rather than looking at the bigger picture and realising that we come from the same roots. Collectively we have more to offer.

One thing that the BPS could do better

It's hard to meet the needs of 50,000 members, but the redefinition of our role as supporting and promoting psychology as a science and an applied discipline should help sharpen our focus. Only a tiny proportion of the membership get fully involved in the life of the Society. We need to look at ways of supporting voluntary effort.

One proud moment

It is always a great thrill when former trainees finally get into the workforce and begin to make their various contributions, and then of course speed past you as their careers develop.

One regret

I have been a jack of all trades and despite my earlier comment perhaps a bit more specialisation might not have gone amiss.

One cultural recommendation

I never tire of portraits and the psychological insights they convey. My all-time favourite is Hans Holbein who portrayed figures at Henry VIII's Tudor court as well as merchants, their wives and daughters. His sitters could have been drawn yesterday. I recently visited an exhibition of Degas' ballet pictures, a must-see event at the Royal Academy.

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