Editorial by Dr Robert Sykes (Editor)

Well, I am back! I try to escape, and they keep finding an excuse to keep me on … now as Editor-in-Chief!

There is always a they isn't there? A them, a that, a thing? Something to keep you motivated or to keep you tied to something.

I am not saying this to moan., quite the contrary; I want to emphasise that there is an inherent choice in everything we do. “They” might have found a reason for me to stay on in a role, but it is me who decided to see it through.

And that is the point I wanted to make – take a look in your life, and ask yourself if you are happy with all the roles you are doing, if you really need to be doing them all, or if you could even do more!

It is important to take stock of life every now and again to ensure that we are meeting our own needs first. That convoluted rationalization brings me to another issue of taking stock – the 2013 AGM. Together with this newsletter, the AGM is testimony to the hard work and dedication of Dr Louise Freeman, our Senior Editor at The Doctors’ Support.

I warmly invite all members to join us for what promises to be an interesting, enjoyable, and informative day in the company of peers with respect for sufferers of mental ill-health.

DSN COMMITTEE

DSN needs members to consider joining the committee. No specialist skills needed, just enthusiasm.!

A variety of roles are important to keep DSN functional. In particular, we are currently recruiting for the following role:

SECRETARY

DUTIES include:

- Committee meetings
- Booking venue and room
- Preparing & circulating agenda
- Taking & distributing minutes

AGM

- Agenda
- Minutes
- As per Committee meetings

If you are interested in helping DSN in this way, please contact info@dsn.org.uk
Doctors’ Support Network Conference & AGM
23rd November 2013 - Newcastle upon Tyne

Programme

09.30 *** Registration & coffee ***

10.00 The Rewards of Keeping Doctors Healthy
Dr Richard Duggins
Lead Clinician, Consultant Psychiatrist & Psychotherapist, House Concern

10.35 How Do Antidepressants Work?
Dr Hamish McAllister-Williams
Lead Clinician & Consultant Psychiatrist, Regional Affective Disorders Service

11.15 *** REFRESHMENTS ***

11.30 “This Is My Life”
Katharine Roff of Act Positive

13.00 *** LUNCH ***

13.45 AGM

14.15 Admitting To A Mental Health Diagnosis As An MP
Kevan Jones, MP for Durham North

14.45 *** REFRESHMENTS ***

15.00 Finding Meaning through Art
Jo Hume

16.30 Close

Booking:
To book a place at the conference, please email us at info@dsn.org.uk This event is free for DSN members and associate members.

Venue:
The Mining Institute is in the listed neo-gothic Neville Hall, adjacent to the Central Station in Newcastle. During lunch, there will be an opportunity to hear about the building’s history and to take a short tour of the beautiful library and lecture theatre.

Travel:
Rail tickets for 23rd November are available via the East Coast website. We recommend booking in advance. Parking is available at the station’s long-stay car park.

Financial assistance with travel expenses:
The Doctors’ Support Network has limited funds, but we would not wish to prevent members from attending due to financial constraints. If you are in need of assistance due to unemployment or low income, please indicate this as you may be entitled to claim reasonable expenses back. Members claiming travel costs would be expected to keep costs to a minimum by using advance fare offers etc. where possible. All claims for travel costs refunds will be viewed sympathetically but the final decision in each case will be at the discretion of the committee.

Social: Everyone is welcome to join the committee for a meal at a local restaurant after the conference. Please indicate when booking whether you intend to join us for the meal so that we can make a reservation.
Our speakers for the 2013 DSN conference

Dr Richard Duggins is Lead Clinician, Consultant Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist for House Concern, the specialist psychotherapy service for career grade doctors & dentists in the Northern region. He is a long standing supporter of DSN and spoke at our 2011 meeting in York.

Dr Hamish McAllister-Williams is Lead Clinician & Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist for the Regional Affective Disorders service in Newcastle upon Tyne. He also holds the post of Reader in Clinical Psychopharmacology with the Institute of Neuroscience of Newcastle University. Dr McAllister-Williams’s research interests are in the pathophysiology and treatment of affective disorders.

Kevan Jones was elected as MP for Durham North in 2001, and is Labour Shadow Minister for the Armed Forces. Kevan was the first sitting UK MP to publicly admit to having had a mental health diagnosis. His disclosure during an important health debate in 2012 was made with the intention of reducing the stigma associated with mental ill-health.

Jo Hume is an artist, art education consultant and trainer. She initially worked in primary and secondary education, latterly as Head of Art at Bedlingtonshire High School. Jo has been self employed as an art consultant and trainer since 1998, and has a longstanding interest in art therapy (holding a Certificate in Art Therapy from Edinburgh University). She will be leading a PRACTICAL art session and has therefore advised that this is probably not the day to wear your finest attire!

Katharine Roff runs an attitude and behaviour change company - Act Positive. Act Positive has frequently worked with major local employers including the PIMD and Northumbria Water. She will be facilitating a bespoke workshop session focussing on how to cope with less than supportive interactions with other people.
An interest in the topic

It all began when I received a generic email inviting authors to submit abstracts to the 1st International Conference on Transcultural Psychiatry in Mediterranean Countries.

I had already been cultivating an interest in cultural psychiatry by reading the work of Dhinesh Bhugra, professor of transcultural psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London. I had also done some research on the Transcultural Psychiatry Group at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

Enticing

Unsurprisingly, I found the invitation enticing to say the least. But what truly piqued my interest was that the conference would be taking place in Tel Aviv, Israel. Given that I am originally from Lebanon, which is still officially in a state of war with Israel, I asked myself ‘What if a Lebanese man went to Israel to deliver the peaceful message of co-existence through the vehicle of psychiatry?’ …

Films, Medicine … Medfest

There has been a growth of interest in the association between film and psychiatry over recent years with the inauguration of the UK’s first ever medical film festival ‘Medfest’. I recall seeing an advertisement for the Israeli animated documentary film ‘Waltz with Bashir’ in a London Underground station. The film was inspired by true life events and revolves around the protagonist -Ari Folman who is a director, producer and an Israeli Defence Forces veteran, and how he develops post traumatic stress disorder after a tour of duty in Beirut during the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war.

The year of the conference (2012) was also the thirtieth year anniversary of the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, Lebanon. So, I submitted my abstract to the conference organisers.

Keynote Lecture

Not only was my abstract accepted, but the programme was adjusted to show the film ‘Waltz with Bashir’. The following morning, along with an eminent Israeli Professor, I was to give a keynote lecture entitled, ‘Waltz with Bashir, Two Views: Lebanon and Israel’.

I was only a foundation year 2 doctor at the time and every other keynote lecturer was a professor. Not only this, but Tel Aviv has actually been dubbed the ‘hornet’s nest’ by some Arabs due to the acrimonious relationship with adjoining states.

Some people urged me not to go and even went so far as to say that I was a traitor; I was raised to believe that the Israelis are the enemy, with some people describing them as if they were not human. What must the Israelis think of the Arabs? Do they feel as hostile towards us as we do towards them? I remember a quote that truly resonated with me from the 20th century Polish scientist Professor Joseph Rotblat:

‘So long as you view the situation in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, there will be no reconciliation and there will never be peace…’

Join me in the next newsletter as I continue my story …
UKAPH 2013 meeting report by Louise Freeman

The United Kingdom Association for Physician Health (UKAPH) was founded in 2012 and is chaired by Dr Mike Peters of the BMA Doctors for Doctors unit. The aim is to bring together professionals from a variety of backgrounds including psychology, occupational health, psychiatry, and general practice - with a common aim to improve the mental health of UK doctors. I represented DSN at the 2013 annual meeting at BMA House in September.

Increased scrutiny of doctors is an issue

The morning sessions centred on reflections by several speakers on how the pressure on doctors has greatly increased over the last few decades. Tony Garelick (MedNet), Megan Joffe (NCAS), Andrew Collier (Chair Junior Doctors Committee) and Cait Searl (consultant anaesthetist & negotiator national BMA consultant contract talks) all discussed similar topics such as the decrease in doctors’ hours with an associated increase in intensity of working. The scrutiny of doctors from every possible viewpoint in today’s NHS was also felt to be a significant cause of added stress.

Doctors working with less autonomy

The final speaker of the morning was Ben Charnaud from the South West. Ben is a consultant psychiatrist with a special interest in occupational health who works in a service supporting doctors in primary care. He strikingly likened the situation of doctors today to being similar to Vichy France with medics working under a system with which they do not agree but have no choice.

A lack of tie to reflect in clinical practice

Ben was an excellent speaker who fluently described an “absence of reflective space in most organisations which is harmful to an organisation carrying out its primary task except in a mechanical way.” The morning sessions concluded with a small group discussion in which we shared our experiences of how working in UK healthcare has changed over time and tried to agree some lessons for where we are now.

Doctors as part of a family

The afternoon session began with Dr Julia Bland (consultant psychiatrist & psychoanalyst, MedNet) describing her work with doctor couples and families. Apparently medic / non-medic and medic/medic partnerships have their own characteristic difficulties.

The future of the UKAPH

The meeting finished with another small group session about how the attendees, working within fragmented systems, manage to function and support other doctors. There was discussion over the future of UKAPH and whether it needed to have a more formal structure.

You may notice that no website yet exists for the United Kingdom Association for Physician Health. However, there is a dedicated UKAPH website ... to the African Pygmy Hedgehog!
Go play it in the shed!

When my much-loved grandmother died at the age of 92 she left me her violin. She’d not played since her teenage years, but believed it to be valuable. The violin repairer who overhauled it for me pronounced it to be a copy of the £100,000 German original but said it had a good sound. Soon after her death, I had a go at teaching myself from a book but didn’t get far. Although able to discipline myself to regular practice, at that time I was less tough than I am now, so my husband’s suggestions to “go and play it in the shed” left me discouraged!

Life changes met inspiration

By 2009, I had learned to live with my life-long recurrent depression and persistent anxiety, and managed to return to work as a GP locum after several years away, and was also training for a marathon. I found myself an inspirational violin teacher and began again; this time determined to keep going until I could play in a local orchestra.

Excruciating

Although I had learned music in my youth (piano and clarinet to grade 8 standard) it was hard. My Nan always told me ‘you had to make your own notes.’ At the beginning my sound was excruciating. I knew how it should sound, but lacked the technique to produce it. The adverse comments came thick and fast.

A second chance … at medicine and music

So I invested in a heavy practice mute to dull the volume. Then, in 2010 I took grade 1 and 2, gaining a distinction in both, giving me much needed encouragement to keep at it. I felt as though I had been given a second chance – at medicine and music; life had become very full and very fulfilling again in a way it hadn’t been for many years.

Since then I have kept steadily on; constantly inspired by my teacher Katharine’s beautiful playing, as well as her friendship and loving care. She is certainly the best music teacher I’ve ever had.

My first concert on the horizon

I’m now at about grade 6 -7 level and have just joined a nearby orchestra. Fortunately they are very welcoming and tolerant of my shortcomings. My first concert will be in November. Eventually I would love to play in the European Doctors’ Orchestra, but the standard keeps going up and up. At least with the violin, many are needed (whereas with the clarinet, they require only two); so, I may have a chance of getting a place in the future.

A duet with my dog ...

Meanwhile I will keep on; although I still get the odd disparaging comment at times, I feel they are now tinged with considerable admiration. My dog is my greatest fan – he comes charging in from the garden when I start to play and sings along on a completely different note, making the most fearful racket!
Film review by Ahmed Hankir

*Side Effects* is a 2013 American psychological thriller motion picture directed by Steven Soderbergh. Rooney Mara has shed her Dragoon Tattoo, but still delivers as a lead actor. The film co-stars the charismatic Jude Law, the seductive Catherine Zeta-Jones, and an impressive performance from Channing Tatum, playing a more sentimental role than usual for him.

In the opening scene, we are introduced to the debonair British psychiatrist, Jude Law, who has been asked to conduct a risk assessment on Mara’s character following a road traffic collision presumed to be due to a suicide attempt. It is striking that Law’s character is both earnest and diligent, with a true passion and skill that for me was inspirational.

For instance, in one scene, police officer makes a complete mess of handling a distressed service user, using flippant and pejorative remarks that cause the situation to spiral out of control. Law’s character arrives to save the day with leadership, composure, and empathy! He is able to connect with the patient by speaking his native French and also identifies that the service user’s experiences are not psychopathological but are perfectly explainable in the cultural context of the patient. The patient, of Caribbean ethnicity, was suffering from visual hallucinations following the death of his parent. A recent manuscript in BMJ Case Reports discussed how patients from this cultural background complain of seeing their beloved soon after they have departed. Diagnosis: grief; not psychosis.

The beginning of the film focuses largely on Mara and her brave attempts to grapple with the disabling and debilitating symptoms of depressive illness. The audience witnesses how mental illness can have a profound effect on both occupational and social functioning. Soderbergh has also done a phenomenal job in evoking the audience’s sympathy for the distraught protagonist who is suffering from a psychiatric disorder.

As the film progresses, the noose of the affective disorder becomes tighter and Mara is forced to seek expert help. She is then started on an antidepressant (the fictional new drug Ablixa) by Law who becomes Mara’s psychiatrist. The ‘poisonous fog’ (to quote William Styron) that had polluted her mind soon dissipates and Mara is shortly in the throes of disinhibited and impulsive behaviour at the opposite pole of the affective spectrum. We are all too familiar with the fact that no drug comes without its side effects ... the consequences of which could be catastrophic.

Side Effects is a film which delves into the dark side of the human condition; avarice is only one of the themes covered. It also addresses the phenomena of transference and counter transference as well as the allure that a human being’s vulnerability can present. Importantly, Soderbergh explores how psychiatrists are human beings but must still resist all temptations when in the presence of a service user.

Side Effects is an important film that I would unreservedly recommend. It will intrigue you with its suspense and the convoluted trajectory it takes. Indeed the viewer must give their rapt attention to following the twists and turns of the film making himself or herself into an active participant.
The spider who loved me by Mubarika Sami

Help! I called as my wing caught in a web
It's cold out here and I want to get back
To the warm moist bin my family's in
  Fuzzy legs appeared, I counted eight
Then a great big head and round red eyes...
I gulped – Help! I cried weakly again
I swear the creature grinned
My buzz grew faint
It peered up close and did declare
You're too sweet to eat
So fly away fly
To your family
My folks are deadly
I love you so leave me…
Useful Resources

**Sources Of Support**

**GENERAL:**

**Doctors.net.uk**
www.doctors.net.uk
UK's largest and most active on-line medical community. Contains _the couch_ providing emotional and professional support through on-line discussion forum and peer-to-peer support.

**BMA Counselling Service**
Tel: 08459 200169
24-hour support with immediate access to trained counsellors.

**Support4Doctors**
www.support4doctors.org
Website run by the RMBF – aims to put doctors and their families in touch with a range of organisations who can help. Covers: Work & career; Money & finance; Health & well-being; Family & home.

**BMA Doctors for Doctors**
www.bma.org.uk (click on doctors health & well-being)
Web based resource pack intended as a self-help tool to aid doctors in accessing appropriate help for any difficulties in which they may find themselves. Also contact with doctor-advisers through BMA Counselling service. For BMA members only.

**The Sick Doctors Trust**
Tel: 0870 444 5163
www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk
Undertake to provide early intervention and treatment for doctors suffering from addiction to alcohol or other drugs, thus protecting patients while offering hope, recovery and rehabilitation to affected colleagues and their families.

**The British Doctors and Dentists Group**
Tel: 0870 444 5163.
Monthly group meetings for doctors recovering from chemical dependency.

**Independent Career Assessment**
www.medicalforum.com

**HOPE for Disabled Doctors**
www.hope4medics.co.uk
Help in obtaining professional equality for those with a disability or chronic illness.

**SPECIFIC GROUPS:**

**Medical Womens Federation**
www.medicalwomensfoundation.org.uk
Aims to advance the personal and professional development of women in medicine, to change discriminatory attitudes and practices and to work on behalf of patients.

**Psychiatrists Support Service**
http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/member/psychiatristsupportservice.aspx
A confidential telephone advice line for members of the Royal College of Psychiatrists covering all subjects including health, career and problems at work.

**Anaesthetists**
Tel: 020 7631 1650
www.aagbi.org
An alternative contact for anaesthetists seeking help.

**NON-MEDICAL**

**Mind**
Tel: 0845 766 0163
www.mind.org.uk
The leading mental health charity in England and Wales. Work to create a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress.

**Samaritans**
Tel: 08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org.uk

**Financial Help**

**BMA Charities**
Tel: 020 7387 4499
Including the Cameron Fund.

**Royal Medical Benevolent Fund**
Tel: 020 8540 9194
www.rmbf.org

**The Royal Medical Foundation**
01372 821011
www.royalmedicalfoundation.org
How to save money on your professional subscriptions while unemployed / on long-term sick leave / working reduced hours

By Dr Louise Freeman

**General Medical Council (GMC)**

If your total gross income (from all sources) is below a set threshold for the relevant year, you can apply for a 50% discount on the annual GMC retention fee - see link below:

GMC lower incomes

**Defence organisations (MDU, MDDUS & MPS)**

The Medical Defence Union, the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland and the Medical Protection Society all offer deferred membership for members who are having a career break. This is offered at no cost but each organisation has slightly different rules on what they are able to offer.

**British Medical Association (BMA)**

The BMA offers a salary link scheme to allow members with limited professional income to pay a reduced subscription fee - see link below:

BMA subscription rates

**College**

All of the medical colleges should consider an application to their treasurer for either deferred membership or a reduced subscription rate due to straitened financial circumstances of whatever cause. It is worth addressing this as early as possible as fee reductions are unlikely to be applied retrospectively.

**Tax allowances for professional subscriptions**

Professional subscriptions are allowable against tax if you are still working as a doctor. Unless you normally receive a significant untaxed (and taxable) income from other sources such as cremation form fees, it is likely that you will profit overall from declaring your professional fees against tax. If you wish to claim professional subscriptions against tax, you will need to provide the Inland Revenue with the relevant details via a Self Assessment tax return.

The advice on this page is offered in good faith but it is the reader’s responsibility to assess whether it is appropriate to follow the advice in their own situation. Neither the Doctors Support Network or the author can be held responsible for any consequences of following this advice.

If You have received this newsletter via email, simply click the logo. If you have received a paper copy, then please visit Facebook, sign in, and search for us.
Some ideas of where to start with your own CPD:

**Journal reading**

Obvious, but where most of us begin if only to reduce the mountain of unread journals awaiting our return to work.

**Internal teaching sessions**

For employed doctors: If feeling well enough, it is possible to ask if you may attend relevant formal teaching sessions at your place of work.

**External paid for courses**

For employed doctors: If your medical advisers agree that you are well enough to undertake some CPD while on long term sick leave, then it may be worth asking your employer if they will consider funding relevant course fees.

**Deanery**

Your local deanery may offer a variety of learning opportunities for doctors within the region. If you are on long-term sick leave from an NHS post, you are likely to be able to access some valuable learning sessions for free or at reasonable cost.

**BMA library**

The BMA has a full medical library service for members with access to books and journals. Books are posted out to you by the library and returned at your expense. It is also possible to request copies of journal articles.

**MPS**

Excellent website with hundreds of online modules on clinical and relevant non clinical career development topics.

**Colleges**

E-learning: Your college may offer free e-learning modules via their website. N.B. The Royal College of General Practice has some excellent free (for anyone) modules including the e-learning session for the Health for Healthcare Practitioners course.

**Courses & conferences**

Colleges may offer a reduced rate for retired members and it is worth asking if you could be treated as retired for the purpose of paying conference fees if you are on a career break due to ill health.

**IT training**

If you are not working and in receipt of a government benefit such as Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA) you should be able to access relevant IT training without cost. There are many different providers, each with their own specific funding criteria in this field. One example of the type of IT training available is the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) which is widely recognised by the NHS as a badge of proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office. The ECDL qualification counts as 40 hours of CPD and, depending on the provider, may often be followed online at home. Your local Jobcentre Plus may be able to provide you with suggestions of appropriate local IT training providers.

**Tax allowances for CPD expenses**

If you are still employed or working as a doctor in some capacity, expenses incurred for CPD events may be allowable against tax. You will need to inform the Inland Revenue of your claim for adjustment of your tax allowance.
DSN is a thriving community of doctors with mental health problems. We offer a range of services from regional support meetings and social events to the more involved such as our flagship service the doctors support line (DSL) - doctors for doctors and entirely confidential. We would love to offer this for free but due to running costs and lack of funds, that would not be sustainable. Free online support can always be reached via our website.

PO BOX 360, STEVENAGE, HERTS, SG1 9AS

WEB: www.dsn.org.uk (login: members@dsn.org / password: bluesky)
DOCTORS SUPPORT LINE: 0844 395 3010 4p/min

SUPPORT MEETINGS

London & SE Support meeting are at Sally ’s house in Ealing, West London. Contact membership@dsn.org.uk

York Please contact Rosemary on either 01142305537 or lethem@doctors.org.uk for details and/or to be added to the groups ’ mailing list.

North East First Monday of the month at 18.00 from 7th October meetings at Quilliams nr Haymarket in Newcastle. Contact Louise@ffzzz.plus.com

North West Regular support meetings or day trips run on an ad-hoc basis. Please contact astrid@dsn.org.uk to attend.

South For details regarding the Southampton support group please call Helen on 07811 360 880 or email hj.plowman@googlemail.com for more information

Midlands Please contact either Ruth at ruth@dsn.org.uk or Joy at joykdz@yahoo.co.uk

Scotland Often take place at Malcolm's flat; contact malcolmh@doctors.org.uk

Wales Take place in Cardiff; contact Clive at wales@dsn.org.uk

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SETTING UP A SUPPORT GROUP IN YOUR OWN AREA, OR YOU WOULD

THE DSN COMMITTEE

The committee has changed slightly for 2013, with Fiona stepping down as chair at the 2012 AGM.

We would particularly like to thank the volunteers of the Doctors ’ Support Line, who are not mentioned here.

The committee is now as follows:

**Angelika:** Chair

**Louise:** Vice Chair

**Howard:** Treasurer

**Alison:** Secretary

**Sally:** Membership Secretary

**Rob:** Exec. Editor (Newsletter & Website)

**Ahmed:** Editor (Newsletter)

**Roberta:** Doctors ’ Support Line (DSL)

**Fiona:** GMC Liaison

**Maureen:** Conference Co-ordinator

**Clive:** DSN Wales

**Malcolm:** DSN Scotland

**Other regular volunteers:**

**Declan:** Forums

**Richard:** Fundraising

**Tanya:** DSL

We are on Facebook! Come and join us and show your support...

If You have received this newsletter via email, simply click the logo. If you have received a paper copy, then please visit Facebook, sign in, and
DSN POSTER: Feel free to print out and display in communal areas.

THE DOCTORS SUPPORT NET-

WWW.DSN.ORG.UK
Contact us at info@dsn.org.uk

Peer support for doctors suffering from mental distress

Campaigning to reduce the stigma of mental illness
Liaising with the GMC, NCAS and PHP
Expert advice to those undergoing GMC procedures on health grounds
Anonymous email forum
Social outings and support meetings
The Confidential Doctors Support Helpline (see below)

Support Line: 0844 395 3010
Mon, Tues: 8pm - 11pm / Wed, Thurs, Fri: 8pm - 10pm / Sunday: 4pm - 10pm