



Faculty of Eating Disorders Newsletter

March 2020

Eating Disorder Faculty
Newsletter



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We are keen to improve communication with members of the Faculty, to highlight the work of the Faculty, and to include members in this. Rather than continuing to produce lengthy newsletters that are rarely opened, or read, we plan to send out more regular blog pieces. If there is anything you would like to know about the Faculty, or its work, or anything you would like included in a blog then please get in touch.

And please follow us on Twitter.



Dr Stephen Anderson
@RCPsychEDFac

Introduction to Dr Agnes Ayton Chair of the Faculty of Eating Disorders



Agnes Ayton is known to many of you. She took over from Dasha Nicholls as chair of the Faculty in July 2019.

Rather than asking Agnes to write a piece for the newsletter, I thought it would be interesting to do a brief interview to introduce her to Faculty members

What are your aims for the faculty and the wider eating disorder community as chair of the faculty?

I took over as Chair of the Faculty in July 2019, having previously worked as Vice Chair. One of the main reasons I was interested in taking on this role was to ensure continuity and the completion of important projects started under the leadership of the previous Chair, Dasha Nicholls. We started together in 2015 as Chair and Vice chair of the Faculty, and it took us some time to understand how the Faculty can influence policy within the College and at national level. This continues to be a steep learning curve!

My main aims are to raise the profile of eating disorder psychiatry, not just within the College, but also nationally: our patients deserve high quality and well-funded services, and a well-trained and motivated workforce. I believe that we can achieve this by engaging with relevant stakeholders and ensuring that our position statements and College reports use robust and evidence-based methodology. I am very pleased that for the first time, the Faculty has a Parliamentary scholar, Kate Highton, who works with Baroness Parminter in the House of Lords, and that with their help important questions relating to eating disorders were raised in Parliament.

Our strategy for 2019-20:

- 1) To improve education and training, and promote research into ED psychiatry
- 2) To promote recruitment and retention in ED psychiatry
- 3) To improve standards and quality across ED psychiatry and wider MH services, and support the prevention of mental ill health
- 4) To be the voice of ED psychiatry

- 5) To support ED psychiatrists in achieving their professional potential by providing an excellent member experience
- 6) To ensure effective management of resources and provide an excellent experience so as to deliver agreed priorities efficiently.

Since the publication of the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman report, we have been working with internal and external stakeholders (BEAT, GMC, AOMRC, HEE and NHSE) to improve medical education in relation to eating disorders, for all doctors, at all levels. This has been a slow process, but we are making progress, and the development of e-learning materials for foundation doctors, and training packages for medical students and foundation schools will be completed in the next 6 months. I have also been working with the RCPsych curriculum revision team as part of the General Adult Psychiatry Specialist Advisory Committee to ensure that eating disorders are represented in the core and higher specialist curricula.

I have also been working with NHSE as part of the PHSO implementation group.

The latest census by the College found that 15 per cent of eating disorder consultant posts are unfilled. We are in the process of exploring this in more detail. Please share our [survey](#) with all consultants working in eating disorders.

I am very pleased that our first two days conference in December was sold out. This would not have been possible without Ashish Kumar's ingenuity and dedication in organizing the program, together with the AED European Chapter. We were honored that the conference was opened by our President, Wendy Burn. We had internationally renowned speakers; representatives from the GMC attended, as did Baroness Parminter. I am keen that in the future we shall share some of the keynote presentations on our website, to improve member experience. We shall start this from November 2020.

What is your current post/role in eating disorders?

I have been working in the adult service in Oxford since 2014. Prior to that, I had been a CAMHS consultant since 2000. I have experience working with eating disorders across the lifespan and in different settings.

I am currently the consultant for the busy inpatients and day patient service in Cotswold House, Oxford, and also work closely with my colleagues in the community. Our Trust covers Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Wiltshire, and in the last year we received in total 800 referrals. We have experienced a steady increase of referrals over the last 5 years. I have also been the clinical lead for the New Care Model (Provider Collaborative) since 2017,

covering a large geographical area. This has given me a good understanding of the challenges and geographical variations in services. We are currently carrying out a multi-site audit to capture these differences.

In Oxford we have been piloting CBT-E inpatient treatment following the work of Riccardo Dalle Grave and Christopher Fairburn. Our results show that this approach can improve patient outcomes and reduce length of stay (and cost). Further work is under way.

What first interested you in eating disorders?

My interest in eating disorders developed during my higher specialist training in CAMHS in Yorkshire. Until then, I was interested in psychosis and at one point I was seriously considering psychiatric genetics as a career option. As a CAMHS consultant I found working with young people with eating disorders endlessly fascinating, challenging and rewarding. I was always curious about the biological and metabolic underpinning of eating disorders. In my clinical work, I have tended to gravitate towards the severe or extreme end of the spectrum and have mostly worked in an inpatient setting. I have a strong commitment to improving care and learning from treatment outcomes and have worked with the RCPsych in various roles. Although primarily a clinician, I have been active in clinical research. In my role as Faculty Chair, I am keen to advocate for improved research funding, which is very much needed in our specialty.

What support or input would you like from members?

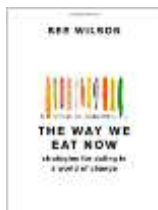
The Faculty of Eating Disorders has about 2000 RCPsych members, but the workforce is only approximately 70 CAMHS and 70 adult consultants. There are only 17 training posts and many are unfilled, which is a serious threat to the future of the profession. I would like to encourage all specialists working in this area actively to engage with local commissioners to ensure that services receive adequate funding, and with local educators to ensure that junior doctors have sufficient knowledge concerning the management of eating disorders safely. Please engage with regional and national work through the College: you can make a difference. We also need eating disorder psychiatrists to work on the MRCPsych examination panels (Paper A, Paper B, CASC). Please keep an eye on adverts on the RCPsych website for opportunities.

In the future, I am keen to encourage new executive members to work with more experienced colleagues in the Faculty, so that they feel supported in their new roles, and can learn to navigate the system as quickly as possible. The four-year term goes fast, but it is rewarding, and new talent is always welcome.

Book Reviews

Dr Jane Whittaker

Looking Back at Fat



Bee Wilson (2019)
The Way We Eat Now,
4th Estate. London.
ISBN 970000824076 9 £12.99



Christopher E. Forth (2019)
Fat: A Cultural History of the Stuff of Life
Reakton Books. London.
ISBN 9781789140620 £25.00

We all remember the fable of five blind men and an elephant – each felt a different part of the creature and came up with a different description of the same animal. These two books are very like that. Both tackle body shape and weight, obesity and the relationship between society and fat from very distinct perspectives. One, Bee Wilson's book, covers the last decade or so. Christopher Forth's book starts with pre-history and takes us up to the present.

We, as eating disorder psychiatrists, see patients and their families who have diverse experiences of fat, body image and food culture and complicated relationships with food. These two books come at the issue of fat from very different positions. Bee Wilson takes an investigative journalist and food writer's approach whereas Christopher Forth's book is a wide ranging look at history, culture and societies and their views. Both help us think about how we have come to a situation where we have never had more food choices, lived longer and yet have more preoccupations and prejudices about weight and shape than at any time in our history.

Bee Wilson's book has an extensive bibliography (rather than traditional references) and reads with a pacey, chatty style. It covers the relationships between food, eating, urban life and the food industry with ease. At our December 2019 Faculty Meeting Dasha Nicholls showed us a complex interconnected diagram summarising the causes of obesity. This book explains these interrelationships in detail.

You have to resist an increasing sense of paranoia as Bee Wilson takes us through the systematic ways the food and soft drinks industries target

communities and contribute, without apparently prickling consciences, to our obesity crisis. The description of the disappearance of regional subsistence cooking, albeit dull, but significantly meeting most of our bodies' nutritional needs being replaced by a global diet made up of significant quantities of highly processed foods is chilling. Predictions about inevitable consequences of these diets, such as diabetes, are well known. We, as eating disorder psychiatrists, also know about the emotional cost of disordered eating. There is also the idea that all cultures go through stages of eating styles and that there might be some hope for the future (as long as you are not poor, reliant on food banks and have the time and energy to cook).

Christopher Forth is an academic, a Professor of History and of Humanities at the University of Kansas. He starts by taking us through the value, uses and necessity of fat, as a foodstuff, for survival (greasing wheels and lighting fires) and as a metaphor (living off "the fat of the land"). He describes disgust of fat – slimy, squelchy and rotten – and the desirability of fat – glistening roast meats, drizzling olive oil. We are taken through history at a dizzying pace in this tightly written book. Every sentence is a nugget of information. The idea that we are now in an age when thin is prized but in the past fat was desirable is neatly debunked. Powerful stoutness may have meant robustness and wealth, but being fat meant effeminate, weak and disgusting in the Roman Empire, especially for men. And early Christian teaching very definitely valued virtuous self-restraint in all things, especially eating. Nuns who fasted are easy to find and mediaeval and early modern monarchs were mocked for being fat. A notable exception is Henry VIII (in England, but not in France) thanks to good PR and a flattering portrait by Hans Holbein. And images of fat priests helped drive the reformation

Neither of these books could be classed as core textbooks for an eating disorder psychiatrist, or required reading for our MRCPsych trainees. But if, like me, the cultural and political history of our relationships with food and our bodies helps us reflect on our patients' experience then I would heartily recommend both of these books for your bookshelf

Parliamentary Scholar's Scheme

Dr Kate Highton

The Parliamentary Scholar's Scheme has been one of the most different and interesting things I've done during my training. The RCPsych scheme, funded by the BMA foundation, pairs up trainees with peers in the House of Lords who have an interest in mental health. Each placement is for one day a week and lasts for a year. I was somewhat surprised to be matched with

Baroness Parminter, a Liberal Democrat peer, who campaigns on eating disorders as I have actively avoided this area during my training. My sister has anorexia and I had quite a negative perception about what working in this field would be like. Seeing Baroness Parminter speaking so openly about her daughter's anorexia and using this horrible experience to try to improve services for others has been truly inspiring. The isolation, secrecy and shame that are part of these illnesses for sufferers and their families, can be challenged by brave campaigners, like Baroness Parminter, sharing their personal stories.

Peers can use their position in the House to put pressure on government ministers. Since I started the role in November, after a hiatus for the general election, Baroness Parminter has asked a 'topical question' following the report from NHS digital about the increase in admissions for people with eating disorders. She also held a 'question for short debate' where peers debated eating disorders services for around an hour and a half. During these debates other peers spoke of the lack of inpatient beds, out of area placements, difficulties in transition from CAMHS to adult services and the overlap between eating disorders and obesity. Baroness Sheila Hollins, ex-President of the college and founder of the parliamentary scholar's scheme, spoke about the vacancy rate for consultants in eating disorders and psychiatry as a whole. Baroness Parminter's speech highlighted the failure of the government to meet the standards detailed in the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's inquiry in 2017.

Another of the Peers on the scheme, Lord Brooke, who has an interest in childhood obesity, arranged a meeting with Duncan Selbie, the CEO of Public Health England. We had a really useful discussion about the harmful impact of some of the public health messaging on obesity for people with eating disorders. It seemed that PHE were only just becoming aware of the issue and they said that they would welcome the Faculty 'keeping in touch' with them about messaging so they can try to get this right.

Our aims over the next few months are to follow up on the report by the coroner relating to the death of Avril Hart by calling for a national mortality review into deaths from eating disorders. We are also thinking about the responsibility that universities may have to support people with eating disorders and other mental illnesses. We hope to explore ways that universities might be incentivised to provide better monitoring and support for students with mental illness. We will continue to request that the government collects more accurate prevalence data to help with workforce planning and hope that they will consider adding data on adult eating disorders services to the mental health dashboard. We are due to meet with Tim Kendal from NHSE who is running the 'transformation fund' pilot sites.

We plan to ask how these pilots will be evaluated and what these outcomes might mean for services around the country. Baroness Parminter will continue to ask questions of medical schools, the GMC, the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Royal College of Psychiatrists and other training bodies to ensure that doctors and other health professionals have adequate training on identification and management of eating disorders.

It has been really helpful to join the Eating Disorder faculty and a steep learning curve! I'm very grateful for all the support in thinking about topics that I often have little knowledge of. If anyone notices anything in the media relating to eating disorders please do get in touch as Baroness Parminter can then ask a topical question in the house. You can also suggest written questions that we could submit to the minister. Baroness Parminter is very approachable and really happy to hear from people with any ideas. She has encouraged people from the faculty to get in touch and come in a meet her in parliament if they are interested.

Feedback from our Annual Conference

London, December 2019

As noted in the interview with Agnes Ayton, we had our first two day conference in London in December 2019. This was run jointly with the European Chapter of the Academy for Eating Disorders and was a great success. The event was fully booked, with a waiting list! We offered a number of bursary prizes for patients, carers, medical students and trainees to be able to attend the event, and some feedback from bursary winners is included below.

Higher Trainee Bursary Winner

Dr Kathryn Speedy

In December 2019, I was fortunate to attend the Faculty of Eating Disorders joint meeting with the European Chapter of Academy for Eating Disorders "Art and Science of Eating Disorders: A Global Vision to Help Eating Disorder Patients and Carers", and what a wonderfully inspiring two days it was. I have always had an interest in eating disorders, but services in Wales, where I completed my Core Psychiatry Training and am currently an ST4 in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, have historically been under-resourced and it is often only the most severe cases who come in to our services.

There is hope that this will change following the publication of the Welsh Government's Eating Disorder Service Review and the acceptance of all 22 of its recommendations in September 2019, many of which place an emphasis on earlier intervention and the accessibility of services to all. It is therefore a pivotal time for Eating Disorder services in Wales, and I was grateful for this opportunity to attend the conference and learn more about services in other parts of the UK and research that has come from around the world. There was such a diverse programme of speakers, from whom I learnt so much that my "brief" notes became 8 pages!

Highlights of the conference for me were talks by Dr Dasha Nicholls and Professor S. Bryn Austin, both of which focused on Public Health Prevention and have sparked many a conversation with family, friends and colleagues since. I hope that the prevention of eating disorders is something that we continue to talk about in Wales, as what was clear from the conference was that many current Public Health policies, designed to target obesity, are unhelpful.

Other memorable moments included the coming together on the stage of Psychiatry, Paediatrics and Gastroenterology in their joint presentation on MARSIPAN, and the sharing of patient stories, which was an ongoing theme throughout the conference. I would like to extend a thank you to all of the speakers across the two days, and to those involved in the organising of the conference, as it was truly an unforgettable experience that has certainly played a part in shaping the future direction of my career.

Patient Bursary Winner

Sarah Keith-Roach

In July this year I recorded an interview with the BBC RADIO 4 Woman's Hour programme about my recovery from anorexia nervosa as an adult woman in my 40s after three decades of disordered eating and illness. It has been and continues to be (5 years on since I started my recovery) a wonderful transformative journey back into loving gentle connection with myself and into belonging and relationship with the wider world and my fellow human beings. The feedback from my interview has been wonderful to behold as many, many women and some men have felt able to step forward out of isolation and shame and whisper 'I want to be well, too'. My message is that we can do this getting well and healing together in community.

After my interview was broadcast Professor Janet Treasure invited me to collaborate with her and her team at The Maudsley in the TRIANGLE project which is researching novel ways of keeping carers and patients and medical

professionals working harmoniously together to strengthen trust and recovery. We filmed some little video clips in August and in January 2020 I'll be returning to the hospital to brainstorm with senior nurse practitioner Caroline Norton as she develops new carer and patient together approaches in inpatient care.

It is now my quiet passion to share my story of hope and encouragement. I've trained with Sussex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust as an expert by experience and I'll be speaking at a conference for AHP professionals in January at The University of Sussex. I start training to be a psychotherapist in September 2020.

Professor Treasure generously suggested I apply for a scholarship to attend the faculty conference in eating disorders at The Royal College of Psychiatrists. I was thrilled when I heard I had been awarded the place and I arrived on a Wednesday in London quietly excited and feeling very open.

The conference was coordinated and managed so beautifully. Jonathan Bennett and his colleagues were super organised in sending travel and practical details in advance and on arriving at Prescott Street we all received a warm and genuine welcome. I also found the stylish light filled building an uplifting place to spend time in. I enjoyed meeting delegates from so far away as Perth, Western Australia (Dr Caroline Crabb) and Greece.

There was a lovely atmosphere at the conference of friendship and warm collaboration and deep heartfelt commitment to this field and I was very touched by this. After three decades of attempting in one way or another to 'dodge' treatment or intervention, I truly witnessed how all these good people were motivated by deep human care and kindness. I felt quite moved in my place there as a former patient with chronic and enduring anorexia nervosa and now little by little transitioning into a role of Sarah hoping to share some of my own hope and encouragement with others.

Unfortunately because South West Trains had a month long strike on all trains into London from my home town in Surrey, I had to leave extremely early on the Wednesday morning to be there for 8.45am and by the time I got home on Wednesday night I knew it would be too much to try to attempt the same journey all over again the next morning. As much as I could I followed you all on Twitter on the Thursday and I am waiting with eager anticipation for the scripts from the talks to be released onto your RCPsych website so I can soak them all up.

If I'm lucky enough to be offered a place at one of your future conferences I will definitely stay in London overnight close to the venue so I can immerse myself fully in all it has to offer.

I did manage to watch Lorna (on a video on [Twitter](#)) giving her very moving talk about her recovery from anorexia nervosa on day two of the conference. Bravo to her. She was fantastic: lucid, open, passionate and inspiring.

Having had a flavour of all you are about I'm now very keen to come to your next gathering and this time meet more people and introduce myself to you. I have submitted an abstract to give a short talk at the EDIC conference in March 2020 and I'd love to share my insights and meet more of you there.

Thank you all again for a wonderful first taste of an insider's view of all the work you are doing to relieve suffering and free human beings to live in freedom and in relaxed ease and belonging. I salute you all.

Medical Student Bursary Winner

Benjamin Geers, Manchester University

I was thrilled to receive a bursary to attend the conference and had a lovely time. Everyone was very welcoming and friendly, and it was great meeting so many people working in a variety of settings within eating disorders. All the workshops I attended were fascinating. The workshop on careers in eating disorders showed me just how interesting the speciality is, and how much of a difference working within the field can make. This was reflected in the wide range of fascinating talks at the conference; from neuroscience to public health to cultural understandings and treatments of eating disorders. I loved how holistic the conference was, with talks covering every aspect of the biopsychosocial model. Hearing from so many leading researchers was truly inspiring and showed me the variety of research opportunities within eating disorders. As a medical student interested in research, this made the speciality very appealing to me. It was great seeing clinicians and researchers from a variety of different countries coming together to discuss important issues within the field of eating disorders evoking a strong sense of international teamwork and collaboration. I left the conference feeling very inspired about the real change being made to help individuals with eating disorders and the opportunities available to make a difference in the speciality.

Future Events

Annual Conference – 5-6 November 2020

Conference Theme – Enhancing treatments & improving outcomes

Poster submissions are welcomed for this conference and submissions should be received by 1st September 2020. Further information is available on the Faculty [website](#).

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