

## **Review: South West Division Spring Biannual Meeting 'Psychiatry in a time of Austerity – 5 years on', in Tiverton, on 15 May 2015**

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Bad times are only good for newspapers and for the rest of us it is uncomfortable to examine the difficulties faced by the NHS in general and psychiatry in particular. The meeting in Tiverton was however well worth attending as it was a mixture of insight, advice and reality check. Professor John Cox was as always entertaining in his deconstruction of the foolishness of the NHS changes. What is obvious is that just trying to hang on is at best uncomfortable/ demoralising and at worst disastrous, engagement with change is the only viable option as the two speakers closest to Westminster [Geraldine Strathdee and Adrian James] made clear.

David McDaid from the London School of Economics was fascinating and could have continued long beyond his allotted slot. Fascinatingly his research shows not only an increase in depression and suicide following a recession – as one would expect, but also a raised risk in populations who are “left behind” when the slow – down eases. This illuminates the continuing suffering of our patients and the widespread dejection of NHS staff coping with continued below inflation pay rises.

Dan Meron made a startlingly energetic presentation about the [business canvas model](#), a very useful structure for thinking about change which is favoured by being simple, comprehensive and it *can be written on a single side of paper*.

The debate occurred entertainingly between two risk assessment experts from Nottingham University [Professor Kevin Browne and Ruth Tully] who sparred happily over whether the emphasis on risk assessment led to wasted time and money – proposition overwhelmingly supported by the very engaged audience.

So the meeting closed on a positive note with the clinicians wielding their authority and returning home challenged and stimulated.