President’s letter July 1 2020

And so the weeks go by and I sincerely hope everyone has kept well and safe. It’s been good to catch up with some of our members as time has gone on and I hope that everyone feels they have access to good support networks. There continues to be a wide variety of experience and practice among our membership during the Covid-19 months, with lots to learn from and reflect on as we hopefully emerge to a more normal working existence.

Most of us are continuing to work from home which brings its own stresses and strains, especially for those of you with limited space and small children. Other chaplains have continued to be based in the hospice, albeit in semi-isolation. Wherever you are, and however you are working, or if you are on furlough, I hope you have what you need to sustain you.

In terms of support, we flagged up the role of our regional groups early on in the pandemic. Some groups have proved a really useful support network; other groups have met less regularly but have been there using WhatsApp and other means to make contact when needed. You will know where your best support is to be found but it sounds as if our regional groups have been a good point of reference for many.

Mike Rattenbury has done a great job in keeping the website updated with new material, training and resources. There are a few new things on there now including a very interesting module from Leon Dundas. It quite interesting to see familiar faces on webinars and big zoom meetings!

The executive group will be having a zoom meeting soon and under consideration is the possibility of offering a webinar for our members to discuss and reflect on current experiences. If there is an aspect of your working practice in this time that you would like us to discuss, please let me know. I’m thinking there would be several people offering a short presentation, with Q&A to follow.

I have recently been involved with a lot of national conversations on behalf of AHPCC, especially thinking about the future. Chaplaincy has been highlighted locally both in Trusts and nationally as having an important part to play in the way forward for healthcare post–pandemic, if we dare even think about that. It’s important that we have a seat at the table and I have glad to be part of these conversations. Most recently, members of the Chaplaincy Forum met with Bee Wee, national lead for palliative care, and it was good to hear her being so supportive of chaplaincy.

Locally in our organisations we will have a significant role in building our teams back together after being so separated. It will not be easy to meld back together those who have continued to work, those furloughed and our volunteers, so let’s share some thoughts about this too.

Finally, thanks to all of you who took part in the ERICH chaplaincy survey for experiences across Europe and beyond. Austyn Snowden had a great response, mostly from mainland Europe, but also people from the UK (still in Europe, just about). He will present the finding in due course, and certainly at the postponed EHNCC conference due to be held in Crete this year.

This is a very bits and pieces letter, but that’s the nature of the moment. Many of you are sharing your stories, reflections and ideas. It would be good for us as an organisation to collate these together as a record of our experience. If you feel able, please send a story, event or significant moment to Mike or me and we can look at pulling them together as a whole (suitably anonymised) to share more widely.

Thank you for all you are doing under difficult circumstance to support patients and families, and staff, as only chaplains can. Please get in touch by email if you would like to talk to one of us.

Every good wish

Karen