President’s letter, September 9th, 2020

Dear Friends

It's two months since my last letter and so much has changed again in all aspects of our lives. From a chaplaincy point of view, there’s a lot that is different while some things just stay the same, such as our resilient support of those experience trauma and spiritual pain in the face of death. Thank you to those of you who have been in contact to tell us about your experiences and difficulties as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt our lives. Sadly not everyone has had a positive experience professionally and I am aware of one chaplain being made redundant, and some having hours reduced. There is a sense of vulnerability to our profession and perceived role by those looking to cut costs and reduce staff. Hospices are in a vulnerable position at present as fundraising opportunities have diminished and management teams are looking at staff reduction. We know that spiritual care has always been an easy target and this seems to be the case in a number of situations. If you are concerned about this and want to talk your situation through with me or another member of the executive, please get in touch. We have been able to write to several hospices in support of chaplaincy provision and I am happy to add what I can to the conversation.

The executive group has met by Zoom several times to discuss business of the association and how we can best support our membership. We are currently hoping to host a webinar session, possibly next month, to address some of the issues being raised as the pandemic continues. Please let us know if there is a particular issue you would like us to address. The plan is to have several speakers presenting some reflections on a relevant area and then to allow for some conversation. We will be putting this in place shortly, so watch this space.

It feels as if a useful reflection for us all could be to write about our experiences during this time and evidence our writing with examples of support given to patients and families. There are various avenues for publication where you could submit your experiences, so do give this some thought if possible. Spiritual care is in danger of being side-lined and handed over to other professions to deliver, with or without appropriate skills and training. We can’t be naïve and pretend that all is well in the chaplaincy world and that our profession is secure. While organisations speak about the value and place of spiritual care for support, financial constraints, lack of understanding and, dare I say, prejudice, is affecting the future of our profession and role.

I’m sorry if this all sounds a bit gloomy, when I know everyone is working really hard and continuing to maintain the highest possible level of support and care, because that is what we do. I assure you of the support of AHPCC as you continue to keep spiritual care active, valued and sustained.

With best wishes

Karen

Karen Murphy, AHPCC President, 9th September 2020