

## Connecting Physical & Mental Health (Editorial) : Volume 2 Issue 2

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As the latest Deputy Editor, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the second issue in the second volume of the Scottish Universities Medical Journal. I am thrilled to be a part of the committee and – most notably – to launch the most recent issue to our readership.

A wealth of literature has been published in recent years detailing the growing connection between mental and physical ill health. In this Scottish Universities Medical Journal issue we are pleased to publish 'Common Mental Health Conditions in Primary Care' by Fiona Carver and Fiona Jones (page 13), which highlights the need for primary health care professionals to have the knowledge and skills to deliver person-centred care to patients with a dual diagnosis<sup>1</sup>. The authors begin by examining common mental health problems encountered in primary care settings, followed by an in-depth discussion into the problems faced by mental health patients in such settings. Indeed, the physical health of mentally ill patients is of ascending importance to the healthcare agenda; especially considering people with severe and enduring mental ill health die on average 20 years earlier than the general population, largely owing to physical health problems<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, recent research has considered the impact of rumination and psychological processes on the development of mental health of people in the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup>. The paper suggested that there should be a significant revision of the biopsychosocial model, as psychological processes such as rumination and self-blame increase the risk of developing depression. These psychological processes in fact, determine the causal impact of biological, social, and circumstantial risk factors of depression<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, Carver and Jones's article has a role to play in educating primary healthcare professionals in this topical area.

This issue of the Scottish Universities Medical Journal also puts the spotlight on more sensitive issues in contemporary healthcare. This includes Mandy Barnett's article 'Breaking Bad News – Pointers and Pitfalls' (page 53), which offers an insightful education on the ways in which bad news can be broken to families and patients alike<sup>4</sup>. Healthcare professionals have frequently been criticised for their approach in dealing with sensitive issues, and Barnett challenges this by offering a step-by-step guide to breaking life-changing news to patients. This raises further questions, and offers our readers an invaluable opportunity to reflect on their own practice – do you consider your patient care to be both person-centred and holistic, despite organisational and managerial constraints? How can you improve your practice to ensure that your patients will remember you as a supportive and knowledgeable care-giver? Barnett's article offers guidance on such questions, and much more.

In this issue of the Scottish Universities Medical Journal we are once again delighted to publish articles from a wide range of disciplines, spanning myriad levels of experience and knowledge. The Scottish Universities Medical Journal continues to pride itself on publishing the work of Consultants, Doctors, Clinical Lecturers, Medical Students, Nursing Students and all other health professionals, and it is the time and effort of these individuals which ensures the journal goes from strength to strength. We would like to thank all of the contributors who continue to submit articles, and to once again verify that all submitted articles are taken into consideration by the committee. Finally, I would like to congratulate fellow members of the committee on the attainment of their recent positions. I am sure that – as a team – we will devote the time and effort required to ensure the successful publishing of future volumes within the Scottish Universities Medical Journal.

## References

- 1) Carver F & Jones F (2013). Common Mental health Conditions in Primary Care. *Scottish Universities Medical Journal*. 2 (2). p. 13-19
- 2) Lawrence D, Hancock KF & Kisely S (2013). The gap in life expectancy from preventable physical illness in psychiatric patients in Western Australia: retrospective analysis of population based registers. *BMJ* 346:f2539
- 3) Kinderman P, Schwannauer M, Pontin E, Tai S (2013) Psychological Processes Mediate the Impact of Familial Risk, Social Circumstances and Life Events on Mental Health. *PLoS ONE* 8(10): e76564.
- 4) Barnett M (2013). Breaking Bad News: Pointers and Pitfalls. *Scottish Universities Medical Journal*. 2 (2). p. 53-57