

Questions to ponder

It's hard to believe that we are more than halfway through the year already, it's summer (not that you can be certain judging by the weather) and as we start to firm up our plans for the Wounds UK conference in Harrogate it feels like a good time to reflect on what has happened so far in the first half of the year.

We have been fortunate in the last 12 months to have two large European conferences in the UK, EPUAP in Leeds in September 2023 and, more recently, EWMA in London in May. EWMA was a fabulous event, really well attended with delegates from all around the world, presenting a phenomenal depth and breadth of subjects. There were many first-time presenters, as well as the usual experienced world-renowned experts. It is also good to see the amount of networking that occurs at these events with people meeting for the first time after knowing each other by virtual meetings or just having emailed. The networking is such a vital part of these events but by the Friday you could tell how many people were starting to feel just a little overwhelmed or overloaded by the sheer volume of information they had taken on.

For me, one of the most important sessions were the two opening presentations, from Linda Aiken and Anne Marie Rafferty, both of whom were focussing on the importance of workforce research and how little joined-up work there is between clinical research and workforce research – of course, it makes perfect sense when you think about it, how many times do we investigate incidents and look at staffing levels? How much do we see in the national press about clinical staff vacancies and nurse to patient ratios? But do we cite these as a source of the problem – probably not, we look for human error, human omission, human fault. Why do these occur? Because of staffing. It really made me think about how we should focus more on the importance of these issues, both recruitment and retention of staff are crucial to delivering safe and efficient patient care. We can have the best evidence-based care and the will to deliver it – but if the staffing ratios are not right – does it always happen? And let's be clear; it's not just about numbers – they have to be the right mix of people, the right team around the patient to ensure safety and efficiency. These are also crucial for maintaining staff wellbeing, preventing burn out

and ill health (both mental and physical).

We need to understand more about the changing demands on healthcare, the changes in the complexity of our workforce, we are familiar with making reasonable adjustments for our patients – we safeguard them but what about our staff? This is a huge area of research that has massive impact on clinical care but how much do we know about it and how often do we consider it in our product evaluation, service reviews or clinical research?

It's time to think bigger, to understand why we still have the same challenges, why we are still struggling to introduce leg ulcer pathways or drive down pressure ulcer numbers, in order to change, we need to do something different – maybe very different, to have the impact we need.

So from the reflection, what is happening moving forward? Hopefully, you will see some new themes in our programme for November this year, some consideration of 'non-clinical' issues, some support for staff who may be overwhelmed at work and need somewhere to have the headspace to reflect and move forward in a positive way, some consideration of different learning styles too.

There will of course be some great clinical topics too and some higher-level science for those who want to stretch their minds. And yes, we will be doing another Anatomy live session – we will have some new footage and some new thoughts to share.

So we are looking forward to a great programme – which you are all such an important part of, don't forget this is your opportunity to share what you are doing (and never underestimate what you are doing – it's not just 'doing your job' – you do amazing things!). If you have never presented (or published) before, we will happily support you, if you have a suggestion for something you would like to see on the programme – just let us know, and if you need help in attending – our bursary applications are open and can be accessed here – but don't leave it until the last minute.

- Link to apply for a bursary: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WUKH24>
- Link to submit an abstract: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WUKH24Abstract>

Hope you all have a great summer and manage to get some holiday in! ●



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