

WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Abstracts for proposed workshop/presentation for the Employment Engagement Committee

Dr Jenny Willis & Dr N Yoganathan

July 2018

Mental health and personal wellbeing have never been more at risk. The global population is expected to rise from 7.6 billion to 10 billion by 2056; life expectancy is increasing, causing demographic adjustments which challenge both individuals seeking to optimise their life span, and policy makers who must determine priorities for the use of finite resources. At the same time, globalisation and migration are eroding once-staunch distinctions between cultures and identities, potentially threatening individual and social values, and contributing to mental illness. Mental illness remains blighted by stigma, as Ontario acknowledges: “Stigma or discrimination attached to mental illnesses presents a serious barrier, not only to diagnosis and treatment but also to acceptance in the community” (Canadian Mental Health Association. (2014). Fast Facts about Mental Illness. <http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mentalillness/#.Uw0Eo3lupg0>).

In this period of unprecedented change, we believe that individual self-awareness supports making informed lifestyle choices, thereby enhancing personal wellbeing. By taking responsibility for their choices, individuals also exercise social responsibility.

Against this background, the first presentation enables individuals to explore their own values and perceptions of wellbeing by completing an anonymous and confidential on-line survey. Responses will be collated and analysed, and a formal report will be made available to participants. The second presentation/workshop will address stigma at personal, societal and global levels, and its significance for our understanding of mental illnesses and recovery. Pre- and post-feedback from participants will also be analysed and an anonymised report will be produced to complement the event.

The speakers

Dr N Yoganathan qualified as a doctor at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, and began his UK post-graduate training in 1986. He has worked as a Consultant Psychiatrist in the NHS and independent sector, since 1996. From 2010 to 2017, he also held the role of Royal College of Psychiatry Tutor for Wessex Deanery, where he coordinated the training for psychiatrists and GPs. He is a full member of the Group Analytic Society International and conducts groups based on the Median Group principles and dialogue for people with mental health difficulties. He is an advisor on stigma for an international charity, careif, and was the lead contributor to their global position statement on stigma. He is a regular speaker at local, national and international conferences on matters relating to mental health, human sexuality and stigma.

Dr Jenny Willis is an educationalist who holds a PhD in sociolinguistics. Her career has spanned all levels of teaching, and research in diverse fields, from workplace learning to identity and wellbeing. She has a special interest in mental health and has worked for the last twenty-five years to destigmatise mental illness. She is a founder member and editor of Lifewide Education’sⁱ magazine, and executive editor of Creative Academic Magazineⁱⁱ. She is the International Advisor for Education and Wellbeing for a mental health charity, careifⁱⁱⁱ (the Centre for Applied Research and Evaluation International Foundation). In 2016, she led a joint careif/World Psychiatric Association research project on international wellbeing, the report of which is held in the House of Lords.

ⁱ Lifewide Education see www.lifewideeducation.uk/

ⁱⁱ Creative Academic see www.creativeacademic.uk

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre for Applied Research and Evaluation International Foundation: Careif.org