

BACCN Annual Conference, Edinburgh 16–17th September 2019

As a clinical and research nurse in critical care, I was honoured to receive a BACCN grant to present a paper from my master's degree at the 34th Annual British Association of Critical Care Nurses conference 'Moral Courage: Meeting the Challenges of a Contemporary Healthcare System' that took place at Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC).

Heralded by the sound of Scottish bagpipes at the doors of the majestic EICC, the conference welcomed over three hundred delegates and included over one hundred abstracts. There were numerous brilliant displays and presentations, simulation labs led by leading experts, the BACCN Dragon's Den, a research symposium, a study focus group led by Professor Ruth Endacott exploring ICU staffing models, and the captivating and heartening final keynote by award winning author and former ICU nurse, Christie Watson. Not to mention many social events including a pre-conference fun run and the 1950s Americana themed conference dinner.

The theme of moral courage was exemplified by our leading presenters: Multidisciplinary team members from Salisbury District Hospital intensive care unit shared the challenges they faced in managing the Novichok nerve agent major incident in 2018. Taking a wider view, Dame Professor Donna Kinnair, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Nursing, highlighted the important strategic role played by the RCN in driving national policy. For example, the UK Government's recent commitment to provide personal education budgets for nurses.

Among the diverse topics covered, another theme that stood out was the humanisation of critical care: Dr Simon Edgar, Director of Medical Education, NHS Lothian, highlighted the importance of healthcare professionals finding joy and meaning in their work. Against a backdrop of increasing pressures and accelerating burnout among critical care personnel, Simon Edgar described how meeting the human needs of all healthcare professionals is increasingly recognised as foundational to delivering high quality healthcare (Perlo *et al.*, 2017; Sikka *et al.*,

2015). This theme was continued by Dr Theresa Shaw, outgoing CEO of the Foundation of Nursing Studies, in her presentation on creating caring cultures through facilitative leadership. Theresa urged us to realise that our imperfections are important because they are what makes us human, and whether healthcare professionals, critically ill patients, or relatives, we are all humans in this together.

Other presenters focused on the humanisation of critical care for patients and families (Wilson *et al.*, 2019). Spanning elements of research and practice, subjects ranged from non-pharmacological interventions such as the increasingly popular music therapy and animal assisted therapy, to more challenging aspects of practice such as family-centred rounds and relatives' involvement care. For me, these presentations held special interest because they linked with the topic of my own oral presentation: interpersonal touch interventions for reducing stress in ICU patients.

Leaving behind the September sunshine, I felt the glimmer of possibilities ahead, inspired by the talents of my fellow conference delegates. Attending the conference gave me valuable insights into both the issues facing critical care, and the role of the BACCN in driving forward discussions, innovations, and positive changes in practice. I look forward to attending many more BACCN events in the future.

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