

We are grateful to Dr Lesley Morrison for sharing these reflections on her book, The Wellbeing Toolkit for Doctors, published last year, and which we think will be of interest to many in the Lapidus community.

'Our great task is to succeed in becoming more human.' Jose Saramago

As doctors, we are privileged to hear people's stories, and to be offered insight into their lives and the context in which they are being lived. In every surgery, we have conversations with people who are suffering from the effects of health inequalities and social injustice, and we learn about them, their families and their communities.

'Be the change you want to see in the world,' Mahatma Gandhi said and, so, with this knowledge of people's problems, comes responsibility to engage and to act, to try to make things better for that person and for their community. Community is one of the many 'c' words involved in good healthcare. Communication, collaboration, curiosity, creativity, compassion, connection, continuity of care are all important, as is one very important 'k' word, kindness. This book acknowledges that, in order to care for others, doctors need to care for, and be kind, to themselves. They need to be able to recognise when they are feeling vulnerable, share it and, if necessary, seek help. Doctors are people first and, when they are trying to balance competing personal, family, professional and health activist demands, it can be stressful.

This has been thrown into sharp relief by the Covid pandemic when health and social care professionals were, and are, working under huge strain. My aim in writing the book, conceived before the pandemic, was to offer ideas and support to new, and not so new, doctors, recognising that, if they felt better, they would work better and care for their patients better. It's based on experience and stories gleaned from more than thirty years working in general practice and each short chapter offers a "tool" for wellbeing, for example, honesty, hope, teamwork, humour, silence, self-compassion. It references the work of pioneers in healthcare, educators, climate and social justice campaigners, and thinkers and leaders from a spectrum of beliefs and cultures.

In the chapter on self-compassion, the power of mindfulness and meditation is described and the work and writings of Thich Nhat Hahn quoted. 'Taking your own small child by the hand' can provide great comfort in difficult times when a tendency to self blame and over criticise can easily dominate. Emily Dickinson wrote that 'hope is the thing with feathers' and, in the chapter on hope, the invaluable work of Joanna Macey, the 'work that re-connects' is described. Good, clear, honest communication is fundamental to a healthy, productive doctor patient relationship, as it is in any relationship, and the chapter on honesty starts by quoting Robert Burns:

The honest man, tho' e'er so poor,
Is king o'men for a' that.

Patients want, and need, their doctors to have a sound foundation of knowledge and clinical skills but they also want them to be empathetic, compassionate and creative in the way they approach problems. A chapter on creativity quotes Einstein: 'imagination is more important than knowledge'. For doctors and patients, both are essential.

The movement to include more medical humanities in medical education and training is, thankfully, gathering pace. In 2014, in memory of the late Dr Pat Manson, a group of us worked with the Scottish Poetry Library to produce a little book of poetry, *Tools of the Trade*, which is gifted to all Scottish medical graduates. The poems are all short and accessible and the aim of the book is to be friend to new doctors and to nurture creativity, an essential ingredient of wellbeing. The book is now in its fourth edition and some of the feedback encouraged me to write this wellbeing toolkit.

I would be delighted if it encouraged dialogue between healthcare recipients and providers about how to improve the way we offer care and services. Health encompasses physical, mental, emotional and social health and they are all inextricably interconnected. There is a growing body of evidence for the benefits of holistic healthcare and social prescribing, finding natural, kinder ways to treat illness and lack of wellbeing, is becoming established. The art and science of medicine are merging and I hope this book contributes to that process.

The book costs £10.99 and is, as they say, available from all good book stores!

The Wellbeing Toolkit for Doctors by Dr Lesley Morrison (Watkins, 2021)
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