

Care, Share & Inspire: Can we thrive in today's healthcare systems? Global Co-operation House, London - Saturday 10th December 2022

Report

The Janki Foundation (JF) Chair, **Dr Sarah Egger**, welcomed everyone to this special 25th anniversary event, hosted by JF and The Brahma Kumaris (BK). She said it was exactly 25 years to the day since JF was inaugurated.

The charity was the inspiration of Dadi Janki and its aim was to support the Global Hospital & Research Centre (GHRC) and its affiliated activities in a deprived area of Rajasthan, India, close to the Spiritual Headquarters of BK. In addition, the charity has done extensive work creating events and publications to support health practitioner wellbeing around the world.



Sister Jayanti (*Additional Administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris & NGO representative at the UN*), shared how the BKs continue to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a better world, by promoting meditation and teaching the application of spiritual values through its network in over 120 countries. The spiritual values of peace, love, truth and dignity are some of the qualities that underpin this vision. Although the world has the resources for bringing about a better world, there is limited political or human will to make it happen. So, faith based organisations like the BKs have been invited by the UN to support this

journey. Dadi Janki, who was the Head of the BKs and Founding President of JF, was part of the initial BK community who, in the 1930s, spent many years in contemplation, meditation and reflection. Dadi had a love for healthcare and in those early days nursed anyone in the community who was unwell. She continued to care, share and inspire everyone she met until her passing in 2020 at the age of 104.

On the topic **JF: 25 years of caring, sharing and inspiring**, **David Goodman** (*Trustee, Janki Foundation*) gave a general introduction about GHRC (opened in 1991) and its services and approach. **Dr Kala Mistry** (*NHS Community Psychiatrist*) then introduced a slideshow giving beautiful and succinct history of JF activities over the years. This included how the JF publications, lectures, workshops had enabled health care professionals across continents to integrate spirituality in their health care settings.



Speaking about *Inspiring through compassionate leadership*, Prof Michael West CBE (Senior Visiting Fellow, The King's Fund) gave a brilliant and very touching presentation, which included key findings from his extensive research into mental health of doctors and nurses in the UK. He gave a brief rundown of the major issues: huge staff vacancies, increasing stress and burnout leading to physical ill health, alcoholism and depression. The burnout measure was also associated with health and mental health issues and possibilities to make major errors. He shared how 63% of Covid deaths of staff were of people from minority groups. He said that it was not about recovering from the pandemic, but about how to transform health and social care systems for the future, because present systems were not working. It required leadership priorities and collective approaches to live happy lives and feel connected. Prof West identified the core learning from the pandemic as compassion and courage. The NHS staff survey showed that they coped due to the support of colleagues and the outpour of compassion shown throughout the country.



He described what the four elements of compassion were for him:

- *attending* - being present and listening with fascination
- *understanding* the causes of pain through a dialogue
- *empathising* and *feeling* others pain and distress
- *helping* and *serving*.

He added: “Compassion is: the blurring of the boundaries between the self and others”; it is about connection, belonging, inclusivity and doing things collectively. There are several studies that show compassion interventions help with post-surgery recovery, longer survival of palliative care patients, longer term disorders and mental illness. It is about changing how we do, what we do. How do we change cultures, transform health and social care systems? In every interaction, each one of us has an opportunity to change the culture. Also, it is the behaviour of leaders that tells us what is really valued in their organisation. He emphasised the huge impact of leaders on their organisations. What predicts team performance is having up to 5 key goals and meeting regularly to review these, so there is clear understanding of what is important. There is a great need now to develop compassionate, inclusive, collective cultures, not the old cultures of ‘command and control’ and create horizontal organisations.

While health and wellbeing programmes are valuable, there are organisational issues that create stress such as chronic excessive workload issues, poor teamwork and supervision. If we are to be well and intrinsically motivated, what is needed is ‘ABC’: Autonomy, Belonging and Contribution. The teams we work in primarily give a sense of belonging, having shared goals and meeting regularly helps to significantly reduce stress levels. It brings social support and helps to buffer negative aspects of work. There is an enormous thirst now to do things differently and get it right. We are all responsible to have compassionate teams, it is having the courage to talk about toxic interpersonal interactions which cause much damage. Teams that take regular time off, have away days, dedicated practice meetings and reviews of the week, are 35-45% more productive and innovative.

How do you recover from stress? A major factor in recovery from stress is to “engage in activities outside from work that give psychological detachment.” It has been found that, when staff take time out for relaxation, reflection time, meditation, doing something challenging, taking proper work breaks, spending time in nature, green spaces, blue spaces and bio diverse spaces the recovery is better. To enable wellbeing, amongst many things, we need to spend good quality time with people who love us.

Prof West ended by asking the audience to consider: ‘*What is the longest, deepest relationship in your life?*’ ‘*It is with yourself*’, he said. Ask yourself, ‘*How kind, loving, friendly and caring am I to myself?*’ Self-compassion leads to compassionate care for others. We need to turn our nurturing on ourselves and our core values, only then can we connect more deeply, authentically and courageously with everyone else.

(Prof West’s recently published book, *Compassionate leadership: Sustaining wisdom, humanity and presence in health and social care*, clarifies these valuable concepts further.)

This session was followed by a gentle and happy stretch break, led by **Nirmala Ragbir-Day**.

In the following session, **Dr Mary Prendergast** (*Director of Nursing, Health Service Executive Ireland*) and **Prof Wilfred McSherry** (*Professor in Nursing, Staffordshire University*) joined **Chrissie McGinn** (*Organisational Development Consultant*) to share their practical experiences of ***Creating a conscious caring culture***.



Dr Mary Prendergast started with an Irish proverb, *'The where I am is intimately connected to the who I am'*. She explained that after 42 years in nursing at many different service levels, she wanted to produce something that could be given back to the staff. Something that gave practical support so that staff felt empowered,

inspired, valued and cared for. Although a number of different support practices, such as spiritual champions and professional coaching, were in place for staff, Dr Prendergast found that it was still difficult to retain staff. Staff were still troubled about how they would sustain themselves in the services for many years and were often overwhelmed at critical moments.

This led to the initiative, 'Restorative Conscious Caring' (RCC) – an integrated, solution-focused, therapeutic intervention for staff. The 4-day programme was delivered in 17 healthcare sites across Ireland and 10 of

these are now accredited sites. The initiative was based on neuroscience, physiology, psychology and counselling principles. Through an accreditation system, a number of standards were set up and the individuality of the response enabled a better understanding of the process. It offered the support of three invitations:

- not to always believe our critical thoughts,
- to pause and reflect, be present to ourselves,
- to use love, humanity and compassion in our hearts.

It put the refocus on resilience and helped to understand what challenged and what nurtured staff. By looking at responses to perceived and actual stress, it helped in understanding what survival instincts were and promoted authentic awareness on how one coped with certain triggers. RCC was about creating opportunities for staff to be heard, held, supported, empowered and healed.

Dr Prendergast explained about the various processes of intervention within the programme, which included 12 steps of restoration and the compassionate footprint - what we bring into every engagement with people: the kindness, thought, understanding, knowledge, skill. Emphasis was placed on the connection between peace in our hearts, in ourselves and how we can share that.

She also outlined areas where the programme would be useful such as induction in any areas of healthcare, part of wellbeing and for varied critical situations – any situation where people are caring for people.

The feedback from those taking part in the programme included a feeling of belonging and some of the positive measurable outcomes were: better staff retention, reduced sick leave and fewer grievances. Patients shared that they felt safer and cared for. It was also proven to be a preventative programme as many of the staff were better prepared during the COVID pandemic.

Prof Wilfred McSherry shared he has been working in the NHS for 40 years and as a registered nurse for 30 years. He has seen many changes in the NHS, but the health sector is currently going through a massive transition. He stressed the importance, especially now, of compassion, spirituality, dignity and care in the caring services. Even though several reports and investigations, along with various models evidenced in literature corroborated this, the evidence has had little impact in changing cultures. He reflected on three areas: human dignity, spirituality and practice - 'how do we make it happen?'



Human dignity: Prof McSherry cited Robert Francis' report on Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust in which it was recommended: *'Patient must be the first priority..., within the available resources they must receive effective service from care, compassionate and committed staff working within a common culture....'* He shared that it is about people, relationships, connections, which develop cultures of support and affirmation, where people can flourish and grow in compassion. Core to all of this is human dignity. 'How do we preserve each other's dignity in a compassionate, person centred way?' He cited the four notions of dignity –

- *dignity of human being* – it's a fundamental right;
- *dignity of personal identity* – each one is unique;
- *dignity of merit* - although this notion is contested by some, it could be used to build a profile of the person e.g. knowing what their values are, what's important to them;
- *dignity of moral stature* – values and moral principles that guide us.

The *Dignity in Care* campaign that aimed to put dignity and respect at the heart of UK care services, had developed a list of *10 Dignity Do's* to break down barriers and get people to work in partnership.

Spirituality: After exploring these various definitions of dignity, Prof McSherry shared that spirituality has to be the core component of the usual bio-psychosocial model. He shared that he had led *The Enhancing Nurses' and Midwives' Competence in Providing Spiritual Care through Innovative Education and Compassionate Care* (EPICC) project which worked with 31 nursing educators in 21 European countries to develop standards of spiritual care. These standards have been implemented in Wales, but it has been challenging to introduce them to the rest of the UK. In essence, these standards are recognising spirituality in ourselves, in others, and how they can be assessed and evaluated.

Practice: Prof McSherry went on to relate what one patient had told him: *'We get treatment in the hospital and care in the hospices.'* The distinction between treatment and care throws light on some of the issues that are impacting the nursing and health and social care sectors. 'Treatment' is scientific, with technical proficiency and competence, robotic, emotionally disconnected, lacking human compassion and interaction. Whereas 'care' is from someone who is warm, takes time, provides presence, feels valued and accepted as a unique person. There needs to be a balance between hard (treatment based) and soft (care based) nursing. Patients want care, not just treatment and more importantly patients are also able to distinguish the practitioner who is going to provide these from their behaviour and attitude. The *ABCD of dignity conserving care* states that positive attitudes lead to positive behaviour. Behaviours should always be compassionate; this is possible through a dialogue and exchange. Prof McSherry finished by stating how vital it was for spirituality to be included in the Nursing & Midwifery Council's code of practice.



In their discussion together, Chrissie asked how their different approaches complement each other. Mary said if the staff are not cared for along with patients, it affects the service and 'we know what it is to be treated compassionately.' Mary shared that health care staff are trained to deal with emergencies, but not all emergencies, and they experience stress differently to non-healthcare professionals. However, when we see things through the eyes of love, we manage things even when there are stress triggers. Wilfred shared that with the stresses, strains and trauma that people have experienced during the pandemic, it is important to replenish and focus on self-care.

Chrissie then asked about integrating spirituality into nursing practice. Wilfred said if there was an educator with an interest in spirituality it was taken up better. Also, a more strategic approach of having a framework and a network for sharing, increased the possibility of integrating the standards in an educational programme. Mary shared that to talk about spirituality in Ireland, it could be difficult, due to various connotations within religion. However, the light came to her when she came across the JF's educational programme - Values in Health care: a spiritual approach (VIHASA). Through a deep conversation about VIHASA, it was clarified how to find the peace and calm in our hearts which can be spread out. "We need to have people talk about what we can do in the present, how we can take action and evaluate it?"

When they were asked about how they stay enthusiastic, nature, time out, exercise, healthy eating, surrounded by nurturing family and friends all came up, and both shared how faith was fundamental to their own wellbeing. Chrissie summed up by saying that although we are talking about creating a culture, we are talking about individuals and it is about being present as individuals and present to each other's needs.

Dr Rachna Chowla (*General Practitioner*) then read beautifully three poems: *Buoyancy* by Rumi, *This beautiful temple we call life* by herself and, finally, *When I am among the trees* by Mary Oliver, which ended with the words: "and you too have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."



After a delicious lunch and a chance to reflect and chat, the day continued with a wonderful short film capturing some people's positive experiences in healthcare, ***Thriving in Healthcare***, was co-directed by **Dr Julia Ronder** (*NHS Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist*) and **Louis Norris** (*Filmmaker*). The film is uploaded on the JF website.



This was followed by a panel discussion, **Courage to Follow Your Heart** with **Rev Lizzie Hopthrow** (*Retired Hospice Chaplain*), **Nirmala Ragbir-Day** (*Spiritual care trainer & Clinical research officer*) and **Dr Rachna Chowla**, facilitated by **Dr Julia Ronder**.



Each shared about their personal journeys of working in healthcare. Rachna's message was 'find your own way' by working from the heart, saying yes although some moments can be painful. We all have choices and to be aware of our choices. To be courageous to find a way, to adequately honour the people you care for and the healing that is needed. Nirmala talked of 'putting things into practice' by taking time out to quieten the mind, to have an early morning and evening spiritual discipline of daily meditation and living the spiritual values is a must for her.

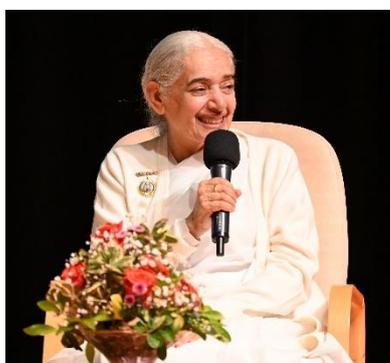


Lizzie was an opera singer, mother, hospice chaplain, now a director of retreat centre and each part of her journey was a calling to support people in their lives. Each transition was not easy. She shared that as soon as you take a wobbly, yet sure step, to respond to the calling, the restlessness and pain of the previous life experience ceased. It is in the strength and grace of Divine. She emphasised 'One word: love' which was practiced day by day in the ward, to channel love every day with compassion and then magic happens with peace.

This led nicely into a short and beautiful meditation led by **Rachel Priestman** (*Meditation teacher, Brahma Kumaris*) on the theme of *My natural, inner landscape* focusing on the beauty, harmony and space to recover that we can find within ourselves.



There followed lively small group discussions in rooms across the House, to reflect on what had been shared throughout the day and the feedback from these were then elicited by **Masana De Souza** (*Nurse, Counsellor, Coach & Mediator*) and beautifully distilled in a word cloud, which captured key words from all the conversations. Along with empathy, balance, respect, self-care, humility and determination, the most used word by far was 'love.'



The final session of the day was Sister Jayanti being interviewed by Suja Chandran (*Registered Social Worker, NHS*) on the topic: ***Caring, sharing, and inspiring ourselves - how to maintain enthusiasm and inner strength.***

Sister Jayanti began by saying, 'Today is a celebration of bringing spirituality back into health care.' She talked about vibrations - as an energy that emanates from our own thoughts, feelings and intentions - and reaches out and touches others. Asked how she is able to continue to inspire people with her wisdom and calm, she said, 'I have received so much from the spiritual leaders of our organisation and I want to give the return of that.' Secondly, spiritual discipline - early morning meditation and time for study, recharges the inner battery and enables her to share with others. And, thirdly, she had an excellent mentor in Dadi Janki, with whom she shared a room for 40 years.

Sister Jayanti talked about how we don't realise our inner power and we have to be very careful about what we say, because we can all influence people - both ways. We can hurt and create a scar or we can inspire. She cited studies at Harvard and Yale Universities on kindness - that one individual has an influence on 125 others.

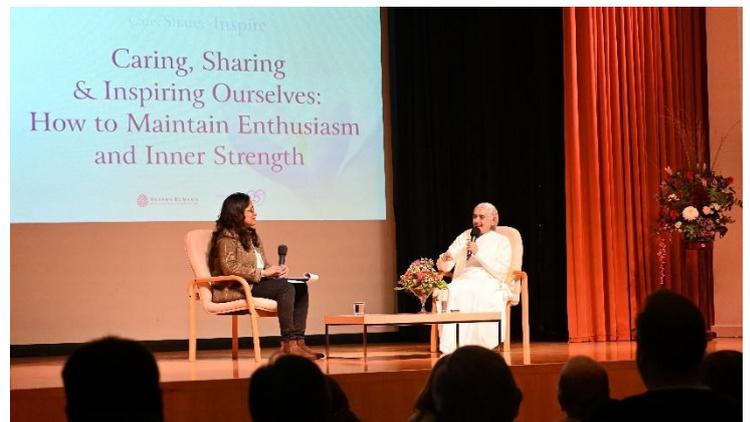
On how divine love has operated in her life, Sister Jayanti said her first experience of herself was as a being of light and the Source gave her an amazing experience of powerful, divine love that kept her on cloud nine for a whole year, carrying her through many experiences. Then, coming back to London, she 'forgot about divine love.' She had to work through her inner demons and sort things out and then forge a connection that was based more on her effort than God's grace. 'You need to be determined to practise things yourself.' To the question why we don't see much self-care even though there's a lot of talk of it, Sister Jayanti replied that it 'required discipline for the self, which isn't so easy... it's easy to skip it.' She talked of a 'lack of prioritisation, a lack of

giving importance to the self. You have to be quite determined with yourself to follow a routine that works for you and is supportive. A routine is very helpful when you are trying to bring stability within a life that's very busy.' 'When you feel the benefit from something it's a very good incentive to keep going with it. Meditation brings immediate benefit, so you enjoy it and move forward with it. Loving the self isn't such an easy thing. You know yourself and the challenges inside and the weaknesses you're dealing with. Spirituality tells you that within every human being there is goodness. When I meditate the peace, the love, will emerge. When I get slack, I lose touch and there isn't that experience of self-love.'



Suja asked: 'With all the shortages, waiting lists and strikes do we need to look at patience as a power to ride what's happening in healthcare?', Sister Jayanti responded: 'Patience, but also hope. Meditation is a good method to develop patience. 'It's rarely cited as a virtue or power these days.' Patience was being 'able to step back before I respond'. She went on to say: 'A lot of people feel helpless and hopeless and, seeing the statistics, it's easy to lose hope but it's important to keep hope alive - through having hope in humanity. I know the essence of human beings is of goodness. We will find a way out of the darkness.'

Finally, Sister Jayanti was asked: 'JF has emerged out of a yogi - Dadi' Janki's vision for healthcare. What is the ongoing role of JF and what would your message be for the charity?' Sister Jayanti took the opportunity to thank people who had played key roles in JF. She gave a few examples of JF's key contribution, in the Indian state of Maharashtra, Values in Health care: a spiritual approach (VIHASA) modules is taught in all the medical schools now. In South Africa as well, there is a strong VIHASA presence. People take so much practical benefit from it. These JF Publications have given enormous benefit to professionals and patients. "I would love to see VIHASA taken up in the NHS, so that it's accessible to everybody."



This was an in-person engaging event and recordings of the main sessions and the power point slides are available on the Past Events page of the Janki Foundation website.

All of the Janki Foundation's activities are offered free of charge as a service to promote a values-based approach to health and social care. By joining the mailing list you will be informed of our future events.