

Reflection on 2008 and challenges in 2009

Last year Horatio made impressive steps forward in connecting nurses in many mental health domains around Europe. Again in 2008 we were pleased to welcome several more national Psychiatric Nursing Associations to join us and to contribute to the work of Horatio. Psychiatric nurses play a key role in enhancing the continuity of care for citizens who suffer from severe mental distress. The many countries who make up the membership of Horatio are at different stages of development. The role of the psychiatric nurse is multifaceted and varied and demonstrative of a broad range of expertise in this changing and challenging world in which we live.

In November 2008 at the Horatio Festival, Age of Dialogue, in Malta a wide variety of experience and learning in practice development and research was exchanged among 435 colleagues from 35 countries. From several perspectives practice, research and education in different European countries seems to present both specific and general challenges. In this process several proposals were discussed for starting or enhancing European multi-center projects. Much can be learned from local examples of best practice in the different parts of Europe, however it is seldom the best option to replicate them identically in other regions. In this regard a culturally sensitive approach and the critical companionship of a broad range of experts can be helpful. Within an international learning community Horatio can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience and enable the composition of arrangements which can be modeled to address the specific requirements of those who need the care of psychiatric nurses. As equal partners with a unique and different input key innovators in our profession can achieve a lot in identifying gaps in care and finding alternatives to enhance the quality of care.

One of the problems in this process of synthesizing psychiatric nursing expertise is the variety of languages used across Europe. Therefore many hidden treasures of psychiatric nursing expertise will be unlikely to cross international borders. While Horatio has decided to communicate in English we recognize that among the challenges presenting in the next period is to identify essential documents in non-English languages and indeed to enhance our own communication strategies in our attempt to reach out to all Psychiatric Nurses throughout the continent. It would be most helpful in the first instance if Horatio members would inform the general secretary of relevant non-English papers and discuss ways to translate and summarize them for international circulation purposes. At the same time our Board are examining the challenge of having our own documents translated to Russian, French.

Again we invite the advice/suggestions of constituent members. Horatio represents the largest workforce in mental health care in Europe and Horatio has now become an important and participative stakeholder in the process towards the development of the EU Mental Health Pact. In this process Horatio also represents the EFN and ESNO interests. Horatio contributed in the preparatory phase. In spring 2008 Experts from governmental and non governmental bodies worked jointly on European consensus papers. The EU Department of Mental Health set out the following five priority themes for examination: depression and suicide, youth and education, older people, workplace settings, stigma and exclusion. At present Horatio is highly involved in the implementation process. In 2009 the EU focus will be aimed towards the implications for practice of the consensus papers on 'Depression and Suicide' and 'Youth and Education'. Members of Horatio will be kept

regularly informed and actively invited to provide input for discussions in the EU Mental Health Pact process.

Having 435 delegates from 35 countries gathered at Horatio Festival in Malta was a great achievement. During the course of the Festival the relevance of European consensus papers within the profession were highlighted several times. Apart from the EU Mental Health Pact process other challenges will face psychiatric nurses in the near future, especially in relation to nurse education where major changes will be expected as a result of the implications of the Bachelor / Master Bologna Education Pact. This may have consequences for the curriculum of nursing schools at various levels. From this perspective educational and research institutes will be stimulated to do more collaborative work on lifelong learning arrangements and international exchange of students and lectures. The Horatio network enables joint projects to evaluate and improve education of psychiatric nurses across Europe. In practice we also need consensus papers on issues which affect the work of psychiatric nurses in Europe. There are several examples such as; patient safety, proportionality and subsidiarity of coercion, promotion of physical health, combating stigma and collaboration with carers. On several occasions during the Festival the relevance of setting up low cost European Delphi studies on views on specific themes in psychiatric nursing was deemed desirable. At present several projects of this kind are in a preparatory process. Findings of those studies can be used for the purpose of establishing European psychiatric nursing consensus papers and position papers for WHO and EU purposes.

In Conclusion the Horatio Board sends best wishes to all members and member organizations for a successful 2009. As we move towards the end of 2008 the World economy is in trouble. Some countries are coping better than others but every country is experiencing some effects of the economic downturn. Psychiatric nurses are busy coping with the impact of the economic downturn on people and on health policies and health funding. We must continue to be committed, constructive and responsible advocates on behalf of the people we serve.

On behalf of the board, Happy 2009.
Des Kavanagh, President