

Holistic, compassionate care: a summary

- Personal healthcare is a humanity guided by science.
- This humanity is an ethos and an art.
- Holistic, compassionate care (HCC) requires mindful titration of art and science in ever-changing situations.
- This titration works like a carburettor: balancing opposing elements (petrol:science *v* air:art) in ever-changing mixtures to serve the needs of the whole (engine:person).
- Too much or too little of any one element causes suboptimal functioning and, eventually, no function at all.
- HCC is potentially important in all our encounters with human distress or dysfunction, yet always differently.
- HCC is particularly important in situations where there is not a quick and decisive physical treatment – hence General Practice, Psychology and Psychiatry are especially vulnerable to its loss.
- HCC often deals with issues that are personal, inexplicit and have symbolic meaning. Science has no access to such ‘metacommunication’.
- HCC is often potent, but subtle and fragile. It is easily damaged or destroyed. Its ‘habitat’ needs protection.
- HCC is currently seriously damaged and impaired by an excess of ‘science’ and corresponding impoverishment of ‘art’. [This is much like the carburettor delivering a ‘too rich’ mixture: the engine will have difficulties with fuel consumption, environmental pollution, power, smooth-running and starting. Healthcare analogies are obvious.]
- Thus more of something ‘good’ may, in fact, be worse.

- Schematisation is the opposing principle to holism. Thus, for example, excessive category-based management will displace attachment-based personal understanding. Examples of current changes adding to this inadvertent damage: in General Practice – the loss of smaller, friendlier practices and personal lists for GPs, QOF-based remuneration; in Psychiatry – increasing subdivisions of medically-modelled care pathways and Clinical-Academic Groups; in Psychology – very similar: especially in excessive, diagnostically schematised CBT/IAPTS pathways.
- Wisdom = knowledge x reflection x experience x imagination.
- Systems that replace clinical wisdom with managerial solidarity generate very serious problems.