

Dear Colleague

The loss of personal containment in pastoral healthcare

Over several decades – as an inner-city GP – I have seen an inverse relationship develop throughout healthcare: the technological improves, but the delicately human becomes impoverished or disregarded. This is evident not only in patients' experience, but also in staff morale and relationships. The damage is mostly to pastoral healthcare, particularly General Practice and Psychiatry.

These accrued problems are painfully illustrated by my current attempts to care for several people with deep and complex distress. All require easily accessed and flexibly long-term havens of healing and containment, but these do not now exist. The human cost of this deletion is evident: I believe the economic costs – displaced elsewhere – are also massive. The attached short article *Six Suicides and One Homicide: The catastrophe of jettisoned personal containment in healthcare* offers a brief analysis of what has happened over the years, and why. To avoid great length I have not here described the clinical encounters, but I have done so elsewhere.*

The problems I have profiled have such wide and deep roots, and have become so much part of standard practice, that they should now be considered as *cultural*. This presents us with knotty problems as cultural forces are massive, insidious and (at least initially) often unconscious; we are all responsible and yet no-one is to blame. This is not an easy place from which to regain our bearings: yet, clearly, we must start from here.

It is in this spirit and with these caveats that I am writing to you. Of course, I am hoping for dialogue – both between us and far beyond.

Thank you for your attention.

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*Detailed clinical scenarios are described in several letters to Mental Health Managers and senior clinicians in recent years containing detailed care narratives to personalise my argument.

Physis: healing, growth and the hub of personal continuity of care. A thirty-nine (39) year delayed follow-up correspondence with Sally depicts a very long-spanned correspondence with a patient about personal continuity of care.

Psychiatry: Love's Labour's Lost. The pursuit of The Plan and the eclipse of the personal and No Country for Old Men: The Rise of Managerialism and the New Cultural Vacuum. Two articles profiling the changes of culture in mental healthcare over forty years.

All these are available at davidzigmond.org.uk/

Attachment: Six Suicides and One Homicide: The catastrophe of jettisoned personal containment in healthcare