

Beyond the Current Paradigm

Narrative Psychiatry - An Introductory Workshop

The limitations of evidence based medicine in psychiatry (Bracken *et al*, 2012) raise many questions about the practice of clinical psychiatry. For example, on what basis should clinical decisions be made when confidence in existing evidence has been thrown into question? Narrative psychiatry offers one way of responding to these questions. This workshop will introduce participants to the main features of narrative psychiatry (Lewis, 2011). This is a form of practice that is capable of accommodating many divergent models of madness and distress, including the evidence-based paradigm. Narrative psychiatry also foregrounds the ethical and moral aspects of mental health practice, and draws attention to the value of the humanities in the practice of psychiatry.

In this workshop I will outline briefly Bradley Lewis's (2011) work on the value of narrative psychiatry and its role in clinical psychiatry. I will describe the three main features of narrative, plot, metaphor and narrative identity, again with reference to clinical psychiatry. I will also consider the three varieties of narrative described by Arthur Frank (1995), resitution, chaos and quest, in relation to clinical psychiatry. The workshop ends with a simple thought experiment in which participants will be asked to consider two short stories about a woman who goes to see a psychiatrist because she hears voices. The stories represent different types of narrative engagement between psychiatrist and patients, making it possible to compare and contrast the moral implications of different stories about madness.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Familiarity with the basic theory underpinning narrative psychiatry
2. An understanding of the role of narrative psychiatry in clinical practice.
3. Through a simple exercise, understand the significance of engagement in different narrative forms for clinical practice with people who experience psychosis.

References

- Bracken, P., Thomas, P., Timimi, S. *et al* (2012) Psychiatry beyond the current paradigm. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 201:430-434
- Frank, A. (1995) *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Lewis, B. (2011) *Narrative Psychiatry: How Stories Can Shape Clinical Practice* Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press.