

Correspondence

Nothing new under the sun


I read with interest the editorial on illness narratives.¹ But does this article say anything new regarding the importance of listening to the patient's story or offer any new insight into how to do this?

The understanding that it is much more important to know what sort of patient has a disease than what sort of disease a patient has is at least as old as William Osler (1849–1919) and probably dates to Hippocrates.

The authors consider it astonishing that half of care plans in the Care Programme Approach analysis had no evidence of recording patients' views and one-third made no reference to carers. Might explanations for this be that there were no attempts to engage patients or carers who may not have been willing or able to be engaged or that the bureaucratic pressure and time involved in the recording process were experienced as barriers?

Authors' reply

We thank Dr Foster for his interest in our work and for taking the time to comment on it. We agree that in a fundamental sense, listening and thoughtful communication have always been at the heart of good clinical care. Our article was written in light of the fact that it remains the case that this does not always happen in practice, and it is a very common refrain from patients and carers that they feel inadequately listened to or involved in care. We thus believe that this problem cannot be over-said or ever presumed to be 'fixed'. Dr Foster raises two interesting possibilities regarding potential explanations for the lack of completed care plans. These might help explain missing data, although we would note it remains problematic that we do not know whether these are the drivers (and we suspect there will be other causes) and, further, it does not help with the fact that such information should be known and recorded.

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Declaration of interest

None.



Reference

- 1 Khan N, Tracy D. The challenges and necessity of situating 'illness narratives' in recovery and mental health treatment. *BJPsych Bull* 2022; **46**: 77–82.

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Declaration of interest

None.

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