

Heads Up: Editorial blog

December 2018: The past, the future and the present

This month our blog has a guest editor: Doreen Crawford, who is a Nurse Consultant by trade and has worked with the PCO UK team as a reviewer of Key Practice Point (KPP) topics in the past. Doreen shares her thoughts on a number of topical issues which, a la Charles Dickens, relate to the past, the future and the present. Over to you Doreen...

Christmas is a time of celebration for many people, but past issues like bereavements, neglect and trauma, whether experienced over the festive period or not, can bring back unpleasant memories. Sharing these and seeking comfort from others at this time of year can be difficult as the pressure is on to be jolly. Healthcare professional may encounter child protection issues and cases in any setting, and so PCO UK provides users with access to the [Child Protection Companion](#) which aims to:

- Ensure that paediatricians are aware of, and understand, their role in the multiagency safeguarding children process

- Assist paediatricians in their practice and to enable them to recognise, assess, investigate and manage cases of suspected child maltreatment

- Focus on the paediatric role in identifying maltreatment and to build upon and complement guidance from other organisations.

The [Child Protection Companion](#) is your handbook on all forms of child abuse, covering child protection processes across the whole range of medical and social interactions: from examination, to identification, to referral, to court.

The temptation is often to bury trauma, to sublimate and ignore it, with the risk that such suppressed emotions will return unexpectedly at some future date, and possibly in the guise of a recognised mental health condition. Children and young people (CYP) are not immune to this and the CYP professional community can be a source of support.

Support, especially for mental health conditions, however can be contingent on a health care practitioner recognising that there is a problem. PCO UK's KPP topics can help in this regard by highlighting the questions a practitioner should ask when considering the presence of a condition such as [depression](#) or an [anxiety disorder](#), and also highlight when 'red flags' should make someone additionally concerned.

Christmas is also a time to look ahead to the future. And whilst this can mean looking at a few more months of winter, there are some bright spots on the horizon in relation to health care which spring immediately to mind.

There is the promise of additional funding for mental health services. People who work within child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) may argue that this is still insufficient, and whilst more money does not immediately equate to improved clinical outcomes this does seem like something to be optimistic about.

The Neonatal Critical Care Transformation Programme, chaired by Dr Neil Marlow, is due to publish its review in 2019. This could make real differences to the way some services are delivered. Beyond this lies the more formidable challenge set by the government of halving the rate of stillbirths, neonatal deaths and children affected by brain injury.

Recommendations are to be made on the self-identification of gender following consultation on reforming the 2004 Gender Recognition Act. The numbers of young people who will benefit from this are likely to be small, but it is one more step towards a more inclusive society. Further to this, the RCPCH has made a call for primary school children to be given "clear information" about different types of sexuality (including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual); this topic continues to receive coverage from sources including the Daily Telegraph, the Christian Institute and Gay Times magazine.

Now, from the past and the future to the present, or perhaps that's presents and treats and the usual round of festive eating which leads many of us to look at our waists in the New Year. Research from the [Obesity Health Alliance](#) found that 70% of food and drink in high-visibility areas of supermarket stores are for high-sugar or calorie products, with less than 1% being fruit or vegetable products. The [Independent](#) reports that sugary treats prominently displayed at checkouts or store entrances will be highly tempting to anyone, but especially children who will then likely pester their parents to buy them. Read Professor Russell Viner's response on the RCPCH [website](#):

"The Government is getting ready to consult on whether to restrict the location of unhealthy place promotions in supermarkets. As a children's doctor who is seeing the destructive nature of obesity and its associated conditions in patients – some as young as seven - I fully support this proposal"

Whilst these issues are relevant all year round, they are especially pertinent at this time of year given all the prominently displayed shelves of stollen in supermarkets.

Clearly there is a lot of potential for improving the mental and physical health of children, young people, their parents and carers. All these recommendations and standards are something to look forward to. If you have an idea about how PCO can help drop us an email.

Merry Christmas!

Mrs Doreen Crawford, PCO UK KPP Reviewer and Nurse Consultant