



'No health without mental health' is a commonly heard campaigning cry. An average GP's surgery involves a great deal of mental health work, and problems of this nature are widely seen in the emergency department as well. There has been a great deal of media focus on mental health in recent months, along with promises of new funding and services within the NHS.

Such positivity about mental health hasn't always been the case. One grand round I attended as a student began with a rather obscure immunology case, which commanded rapt attention from a large audience. As the professor who was to present next was introduced, a sizeable number of the audience walked out! Why would this be, when he was much better known nationally than the immunologist? The problem was the subject matter. The second talk was on psychiatry, and the professor came from the large and famous psychiatric hospital situated directly across the road, about fifty yards from the front gate. Yet despite geographical proximity, the two hospitals seemed to have very little in common to us as students, a view clearly shared by many of the doctors at the grand round that day.

Whether by intention or not, disorders of the mind have always seemed to have lower status in western medicine. The reductionist, scientific method that serves us well much of the time when dealing with physical illness is not always well suited to presentations which don't necessarily relate to an organic pathology. The very business of naming mental illnesses and drawing the line between 'normality' and 'disease' can in itself appear arbitrary, though careful thought may lead us to similar questions around many 'physical' diagnoses.

The Christian student will be well aware that those with mental illness are often among the most vulnerable we meet. Simply taking these problems seriously, and according them the same energy that is given to 'physical' medicine demonstrates that both body and mind are part of God's creation, worthy of equal study and care. Working alongside patients sometimes forgotten by modern medicine reminds us that God values them equally.

Later in our careers, we'll see more and more that mental health care is time-consuming, and that whatever money is spent by the NHS, there will always be a need for non-medical agencies to be involved, whether this is in practical support of patients, or in reducing loneliness. In these complex areas, we hope the expertise of CMF members can help local churches, both in understanding and in practical ways.

And of course, we mustn't forget our own mental health. Much media publicity has focused on younger people, and CMF has published members' stories in *Nucleus* in the past.¹² Problems can arise later in a career, with a GP member discussing such difficulties on Premier radio recently.³

We hope that this edition of *Nucleus* will help you explore this highly topical area through God's eyes. ■

REFERENCES

1. Anon. You're not the only one who suffers from mental illness. *Nucleus*. Freshers' edition 2016:16 bit.ly/2RCBE7U
2. Anon. God's sustaining love. *Nucleus* 46(2):14-17 bit.ly/2A2ttmh
3. Dr Mark Pickering discusses mental health problems among GPs. 23 August 2018. bit.ly/2QEbvzq