Editorial

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The public mental health dimensions of education

These articles in this issue of the *Journal of Public Mental Health* explore an important and topical range of issues – education, gender and climate change.

Over the past year, as a result of Covid-19 there have been changes of seismic proportions to education, with students and pupils required to work at home for extended periods. The consequences of this in terms of their health will not be fully known for some time. Some countries adapted very quickly to delivering learning online, e.g. Italy, while others found this more challenging.

Five of the articles in this issue are concerned with school or university education. Whilst all of the studies were carried out prior to 2020, when reading them it may be worth reflecting on how much is still relevant during a pandemic. The "Treatment Gap" in Israel is addressed by a pilot study by Eliezer Yariv. The "gap" refers to the relative lack of access to psychological therapy for school pupils. In the controlled study, each child received a psychoeducational intervention from a teacher. Assessed through a Pupil Adjustment Questionnaire, the results were positive. The paper suggests that the intervention could be used more widely, with a limiting factor enabling teachers to be trained in the techniques.

In a paper by Siti Khadijah and Zainal Badri from Malaysia, the subject is a perennial one: how students' lifestyle and academic work interact on their well-being. The research presented here teased out the interactions. One conclusion regards the importance of providing social and community facilities for students on the campus. The paper by Monideepa Becerra in California examines other factors that contribute to students' mental health & academic life. They focused particularly on self-esteem and discrimination. Low self-esteem and experience of discrimination were found to be very important for overall well-being, with consequent effects on academic results, and social life. This role of self-esteem may have been recognized before, but less established is the effect of discrimination, particularly where the team found that a high level of discrimination was associated with low self-esteem in women, but not for men. These findings have topical weight, in the light of the growth of the MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements.

The paper by Ryan Christy examines the situation of medical students on attitudes to mental health, and disclosure. He found that among the barriers to disclosure were fear of repercussions, and lack of support: less than half of those taking part considered the available support to be adequate and accessible. This is clearly a major hurdle for some students, and sends a message to those responsible in the medical school. Ashton (2020) gives a brief view of the situation regarding support in other universities.

Providing for the mental health needs of secondary school pupils is the subject of the team in UK who follow the principle of a program known as iHeart, Innate Health Education and Resiliency Training. An intervention was delivered and assessed by questionnaires, qualitatively and quantitatively. From the qualitative feedback, there was a positive shift in thinking and behavior patterns. In this Journal we published a systematic review, *A review of school approaches to increasing pupil resilience* (Neville *et al.*, 2019), which found relatively few relevant studies, so this is a valuable contribution.

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Another important focus of this issue is gender. Saimah Yasmin-Qureshi and Susan Led with present their fascinating study of South Asian women's experience of accessing and receiving psychological therapy in primary care. This highlights important implications for the design and delivery of primary care services in mental health. Sergio Silverio's paper builds on this to make an important call to action on how women's mental health needs to become more of a public health priority going forward, with specific recommendations on how this can be achieved.

Finally, we look at the crucially important issue of the relationship between climate change and mental health. The paper by Marc Williams undertakes a preliminary investigation into the role of information seeking in relation to this topic. Given the critical nature of this topic, we intend to profile the issue of the mental health implications of climate change in forthcoming issues of the Journal.

References

Ashton, J. (2020), "Guest editorial", *Journal of Public Mental Health*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 5-7.

Neville, V., Joscelyne, T. and Chester, J. (2019), "A review of school approaches to increasing pupil resilience", *Journal of Public Mental Health*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 26-37.

Further reading

National Audit Office (2018). Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health, UK Government Green Paper, available at: www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Improving-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-services.pdf (accessed 25 January 2021).