

CONCLUSION

The story of public health under the NHS has largely been one of persistent decline since 1948. There are a few isolated exceptions. Chief Medical Officer Donald Acheson reinvented the MOH as the DPH in 1988 to rejuvenate the profession.⁵⁵ Concurrently, maverick John Ashton was in the vanguard of the new public health movement creating contemporary philosophies and practices.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding these and others, the DPH remains a shadow of the interwar MOH. They shifted from being a 'watchdog' of the public health to a 'lapdog' in the view of historian John Welshman.¹⁷ Webster's view of MOsH being 'a dispirited rump' seems to capture the overarching process of residualising public health further within the NHS over time, rather than capturing the experiences of 1948 alone.⁷

Despite the narrative of decline and a context of constraint, the experience of Guy as a public health professional shaping solutions to the particular problems of practising public health in Westmorland, offers a series of historical reflections for the present. First, the current shape of health services in Lancashire and South Cumbria have been moulded by the past. Maternity and child welfare were historic public health concerns which

have remained despite their move into community and hospital services. This accumulation of changes has influenced the current service landscape beyond the horizons of historic public health alone. Second, the ambiguous place of local public health in a nationalised service has been compounded by the uncertainty around place. A renewed emphasis on its primacy and the potential for individual strategies to rebuild or reconstruct alternatives creates a new space for DsPH, despite the barriers constructed against them. Third, the potential of individual leadership to overcome structural constraint requires an understanding of context. Although Westmorland and Morecambe Bay did not reflect the same urban public health problems imaged by their Victorian forerunners, some local MOsH were able to work with the grain of place rather than against it, comprising more than a 'dispirited rump'. With uncertainty comes opportunity, and if the history of public health tells us that anything, it is that uncertainty is the one certainty regarding the place of public health in the NHS.

REFERENCES

(a full list available on request)

Book review

With the End in Mind

By Dr Kathryn Mannix. William Collins; 2017

Review by Jacob McSweeney, 4th Year Medical Student, Lancaster University

Dr Kathryn Mannix's Sunday Times bestseller, "With the End in Mind", lifts the veil on the frequently avoided topic of death and dying. Walking readers through her stories as a palliative care doctor, Mannix explores common themes present not only at the bedside of dying patients, but also those found within the networks surrounding them.

My fears of the unknowns of death led me to pick up Mannix's book. The lessons shared within changed my entire perception of death and dying, allowing me to put down this book feeling comforted with a new found acceptance of the inevitable. I had never expected a book about dying to have such a profound effect on the way that I live today. I now find myself having frequent conversations about death and dying with those around me, using Mannix's teachings to reintroduce our abandoned relationship with death.

Throughout Mannix's writing, she invites us to consider our end-of-life plans and teaches the reader how to discuss these with family and friends. What is important to us? Who do we want with us at the end? And where do we want to die? Alongside her teachings, Mannix leaves us with a letter template to aid in opening conversations about death and dying with those important to us, offering the first stepping stone to support us in further exploration of our fate.

The gifts of knowledge acquired through Mannix's own experience are delivered to us throughout a series of patient interactions. Through these stories, we are brought to witness a plethora of different encounters. From emergency department deaths and premature unexpected turns to hospice weddings and final goodbyes, Mannix shows us death in all lights and settings with her experienced and compassionate commentary.

Despite its common place in daily life, Mannix recognises that due to modern medicine and hospital-based care, most are yet to understand what dying looks like. She describes "the process of dying is recognisable. There are clear stages, a predictable sequence of events. In the generations before dying was hijacked into hospitals, the process was common knowledge...". To unpack this reality, Mannix offers the reader a story of a young man, fearful of his mother's approaching death. She details how this son has difficulty understanding his mother's current state, desperately questioning the medical care being provided, concerned it is hastening his mother's end. The pivotal moment of this story highlights nothing less than the importance and sheer wonder of sound communication. Mannix invites us into the conversations between a senior nurse and the struggling son. We witness the calm and reassuring approach, as she delicately yet unambiguously details the changes in breathing this family can expect to see. Without divulging too much of this conversation, I will share that the major lesson I have taken from it, is that offering any small level of certainty or understanding through education in these precious moments can be powerful medicine in itself.

Mannix continually illustrates how a carefully struck dynamic between medical interventions and conscientiously constructed conversations can relieve not only the symptoms and worries of the patient, but also the complex relations surrounding them. Mannix's wisely placed patient stories, found along the journey she takes us on, create a personable and touching recommendation for how we can hold power over how we choose to live and die.

As a detailed guide to death and dying, filled with the compassionate, empathetic, and wise take of Dr Kathryn Mannix, I encourage all those curious, or even apprehensive, of death and its complex conversations to join Dr Mannix through her memoirs and rediscover the forgotten knowledge of dying.

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