

Letter from the Chair of ACAT

Alison Jenaway

I am writing this sitting in my kitchen, looking out at the white, frosted branches in my garden and thinking about winter. My first year as Chair of ACAT went by so quickly and it feels as if I am just starting to find my feet. The conference at Keele University in Staffordshire in July 2018 on “authenticity, creativity and positive resources in CAT” went very well and has certainly inspired me to think more about what I mean when I tell my trainees that they need to be more “authentic” in their relationships with patients. I am thinking at the moment that it is about trying to make my professional response match as closely as possible to my authentic emotional response, while still being curious, careful and kind. Not always easy at the best of times, this can be especially difficult when working with patients who have been hurt, and therefore hurt others, such as those caught up in forensic institutions. This issue of Reformulation seems to have a theme running through it of working with patients who present with complex problems and with whom our authentic response might be to turn away. As well as offering Reflective Practice sessions to staff to help them manage the emotional strain of the work.

There does seem to be the glimmer of a growing realisation that simple, brief, manualised therapies are never going to be effective for complex patients with extensive histories of trauma and disadvantage. CAT should be in a good

position to market ourselves if the realisation grows, and we need research to back that up. We had the second of the joint ACAT/Catalyse Research days on 1st March 2019 in London. The Trustees of ACAT are also keen to improve our public information and education about CAT, partly through improvements to our website presence. We have already had one event with a combination of ACAT members and some experts by experience in Manchester, and a second on 25th January 2019 in London. These both provided very rich information about what clients, and prospective clients, are looking for when they come to the ACAT website. It was also lovely to hear how much CAT has changed people’s lives and how they are wanting to give something back to us as an organisation. Do get in touch with the ACAT office if you are interested in being involved in this work as it goes forward.

For those looking forward beyond spring, the CAT conference season will begin with an ICATA conference in Ferrara, Italy from 27th to 29th June 2019 and end with ACAT’s one day conference in London on “Incorporating Trauma Developments into CAT” on 13th September 2019. There will be a CPD day on 12th September on current thinking regarding trauma, for those who would like to make the most of a London visit and stay over.

Somehow the theory and the structure of CAT makes it possible for many of

us to work with complex patients that other therapy models might struggle with, and to acknowledge the social reality of how difficult some people’s lives are. There is a new CAT book addressing these issues in detail, edited by Julie Lloyd and Rachel Pollard, called “Cognitive Analytic Therapy and the Politics of Mental Health”. It has some fascinating chapters, written by a variety of CAT people, and should be a good thing to while away the winter evenings, as you are waiting for the long days of sun to return. Once you have finished reading this issue of Reformulation, of course. Enjoy...

Alison Jenaway, Chair of ACAT

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