

After volunteering for the role of president some years ago it seems both surreal and slightly anxiety provoking to be finally taking on the position. I thought long and hard about whether I was the right person or had the energy to take on the presidency – I hope I am the right person and that despite a young, busy family and a demanding work life I do have the energy for the role.... but you will be the best judge of that after the next 2 years. Either way, know that I tried my best.

One of the main reasons I agreed to take it on, was the person who I would be taking over from. I was always confident that if Mike O'Connor was leading the 2 years prior to me that the Association and the Board of Trustees would be in a great position at this point. It has been a pleasure to witness Mike's caring, intuitive and supportive leadership over the last 2 years. This has brought a real sense of cohesion to the board as well as driving forward significant positive changes across the Association for the benefit of our members. Thank you Mike and I'm looking forward to your continued support as Past President.

Prior to joining the board 5 years ago I was as guilty as many others in thinking that the Board was 'them' and the membership was 'us'. One of the many things I've learnt across the 5 years of being a trustee is that there is only an 'us'. The board are members, just like you. They are passionate about EMDR therapy and its capacity to help people heal. They are just giving something back to the community by their service on the board. And it is only through individuals like this, alongside many other volunteers on our various committees, regional groups, special interest groups, webinar presenters, and more, - it is only with them that the work of the Association can be done.

We are a charity and not a business - We only have a very small number of part time paid staff. We are predominantly run through our members....with volunteers. So, a question for you – are you going to be a contributor to this community or just a consumer? If you want to be a contributor and not just a consumer, what skills or experience could you bring to support EMDR therapy, to support the Association, and support the members, to support your peers?

One other question: Are you we going to focus on evidence-based research or rely on anecdotally effective enthusiasm? Not that enthusiasm is wrong – it's difficult not to be enthusiastic about EMDR therapy - but nowadays, it is not enough. Anecdotal evidence was enough probably enough at some point – in the pre-NICE days. But now, trying to spread the use of EMDR therapy, particularly at a strategic level in the public sector, based on enthusiasm and anecdotal feedback is like going to Spain and expecting to be able to buy something using Pesetas. Those times have changed, we must change with them.

We must continue to build on the EMDR research to date and help reassert our position in the trauma community. Our priority is to regain ground in national and international guidance for trauma. We do that by going back to our roots – in writing up case studies, case series, controlled trials and RCTs around EMDRs effectiveness in trauma across the

diagnostic spectrum. I encourage you to be part of that, I encourage you to do your bit, don't underplay your part, your expertise, your clinical experience.

And as individuals and regional groups please support the work of the Scientific and Research Committee in driving this strategic research agenda forward in terms of expertise, time or money....or all of the above.

Along with this, it is vital that, wherever possible members, create and foster relationships with key stakeholders in the public sector. As therapists we know how important fostering a strong therapeutic alliance is. When you have that alliance with key figures in the public sector, then make sure they are up to date with the evidence...because there is a lot of 'fake news' around EMDR.

At the very least remind them of the NHS / NICE commissioned Mavranzouli 2020 research papers that found EMDR to be the most effective therapy for PTSD on both clinical and cost effectiveness measures. Key stakeholders must be up to date with that research. Help them with that.

As Mike highlighted in his opening address, we have achieved a significant amount as an Association over the last 2 years.....and during very challenging times. We have also grown from around 3500 members to 5000 members.

Mike has already told you about the many exciting projects we are developing bringing yet more benefits to our members and they should come to fruition over the next few years....but only through the hard work and commitment of the whole Association team,.

This should include launching the EMDR Hub, which will be a new online forum for members to interact on all things EMDR therapy (which will only work if members actively support and use it). A fully online accreditation and reaccreditation process – this is exciting. Of course, (like any IT project) there will be teething issues – please be patient with us in that.

We are developing a searchable database of EMDR literature together with the University of Sheffield that will be freely available to members to help and enhance a research ethos amongst our community.

There's also going to be enhanced website features, more online CPD events, new EMDR podcasts and additional social media interaction.

There will be another hybrid conference in Glasgow next year, as well as follow on webinars from some of the keynote speakers.

And yet more....

This is together with lots of 'behind the scenes' developments that may not always be as obvious or visible to members but are essential in the smooth running of our charity.

Watch this space for these new developments and please do what you can to help us and each other.

And finally, like Mike asked yesterday, please encourage colleagues to join the Association....so they can benefit from all the services we offer members, as well as being part of a supportive and collaborative community.

With all the current world events unfolding it is clear we desperately need a larger trauma informed community spreading the message of the importance of the identification, treatment and recovery from trauma.

So, in closing, thanks so much for supporting this conference. Thanks again to everyone involved. But finally, and very importantly, thanks for everything YOU DO for YOUR clients and patients. Be kind to yourselves – it's a tough job that you've chosen to do. It may not always go to plan....that's psychotherapy (unfortunately).....but your intention to help others heal is immeasurably important in our world, especially right now.

I hope to see you in Glasgow, if not before. Thank you.

Matt Wesson
President EMDR UK