



Guest Editorial

Michael Murray

Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.

George Bernard Shaw

Last night I spoke by telephone to a friend in Canada, I emailed colleagues in Japan, and Australia, booked a flight for a forthcoming trip to the USA and made a special effort to watch TV when the English cricket team beat India. (Yes-we do win sometimes!)

I mention these seemingly common occurrences because today is so different from the past. In one of my other roles where I discuss change management with post graduate students, I relate the story of a family who went on holiday to the States. At the time I was just a small boy but it made such an impression that I can still remember my amazement. It was just as if someone had gone to the moon. Now flights to USA are commonplace and cost around the same price as all those years ago.

Our world has grown smaller and the dawn of technology has put the world in my living room. The opportunities for co-operation across barriers of culture, country, discipline and science are as never before. Mental health promotion, just as industry and commerce, must harvest these new resources to address the global growth of mental health related problems.

First of all we may need a change of

culture and acknowledge that delivering individual interventions to small groups of people can only lead to small scale success in terms of an overall solution. Essential as they are such programmes do not address actions required at societal level to enable people to participate in a common effort to improve the environment and other conditions of life, which may affect their mental health and well-being. Secondly, we need to develop cross international, professional and cultural strategies to create a collaborative framework for the promotion of mental health.

Such a framework needs to encourage the:

- development of mental health promotion and research on a global basis
- international exchange of the research outcomes, programmes, policies and guidelines to assist in the effective implementation of such programmes
- design, development and dissemination of “model/effective” programmes
- organisational structure to facilitate the above.

Developing Research

Over the last three decades promotion

Citation: Murray, M. (2002). Guest Editorial. *The Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 1(1) <http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au/journal/vol1iss1/murray.pdf>

ISSN: *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH)* 1446-7984

and prevention science research has developed at an increasingly rapid rate. Progress has also been made to develop and apply rigorous research to a broad range of mental and behavioural disorders and high risk behaviours, as well as to the antecedents of positive mental health, which in turn have relevance for all fields of public health; many of the antecedents of mental health share the same developmental paths as for example tobacco use, cancer and heart disease.

To enhance this progress on a global basis we can:

- ensure existing knowledge is accessible through better dissemination
- enhance the existing world-wide development of promotion research collaboration between organisations and universities active in the field
- address issues of cultural sensitivity into all research protocols.
- strengthen the multidisciplinary base of promotion research by involving relevant professional groups and stimulating discipline specific contributions.

International Exchange

There is the need for effective systems of information exchange on a global basis on existing knowledge e.g. examples of successful practices, advocacy policies, coalitions, organisational structures and training programmes.

Such strategies should include

- an international monitoring system of best policies and practices
- commissioning systems to both access the increasing number of web

sites on mental health promotion and to improve linkage between the sites

- provide for the translation of information into more languages

Model/Effective Programmes

For some time many mental health professionals and agencies have worked independently in developing programmes with the result that numerous similar programmes, directed to similar target populations and comparable goals have been implemented. The re-inventing of the wheel scenario is wasteful, particularly when resources are so limited.

Furthermore with the limited resources and lack of expertise in the design, development, implementation and evaluation stages, the efficacy and effectiveness of such programmes may be questioned. The combination of scarce resources for the promotion of mental health, the growing need for prevention programmes (due to high prevalence, diversity and costs resulting from mental health problems) and the increased call for accountability helps explain the growing interest in model programmes.

Although common for several decades in other fields, the concept of model programmes and related concepts e.g. evidence based promotion, models of good practice and demonstration projects, are less common; prior to the mid eighties these concepts were rarely used. However there is now a growth of literature on model programmes, mainly from researchers in the USA and networks have been developed on a range of topics such as school health promotion work and the healthy workplace.

There already exists a range of model programmes that have been successfully replicated across international and cultural boundaries and although the dissemination and exchange of model programmes is now becoming a priority in a number of countries and this growing interest in replicating model programmes is to be encouraged.

Organisational Structures

Without doubt the most difficult task is in providing an organisational structure to “manage” the above. Various calls have been made for an international coalition to be developed; a coalition that could bring together the different parties and professions working in the field of mental health promotion and the prevention of mental disorders.

However the very essence of mental health promotion calls for holistic and comprehensive approaches, integrating the work of politicians, economists, social scientists, academic researchers..... to invoke a sense of empowerment within individuals and communities. Perhaps we should be looking for a series of coalitions, which seek synergy and co-operation from each other. Particular topics and /or areas of interest can provide the focal point and consequently the idea of coalitions at local, regional and national level may not provide the only key for co-operation.

New technology has given us the opportunity to cross boundaries. Perhaps if we use these opportunities mental health promotion can create even more opportunities for a better quality of life. As John Scully, the former boss of Apple said, “The best way to predict the future is too invent it.”