

## Editorial Comments

This is the first *Journal* for 2006. We will, however, have another one out to you before Christmas, with both *Journals* focusing on emerging issues in counselling and challenges facing the profession at this time.

We are pleased that the profile of research in NZAC has recently been boosted by agreement at the AGM to create a new research portfolio with oversight at Executive level. The *Journal* plays an important role in publishing, fostering and developing research. But as the Association grapples with issues of registration and other matters, it is a milestone that the importance of research in a broader sense has now been acknowledged. Recent comments by Julia Buckroyd, editor of the British journal *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research (CPR)*, seem timely. She says:

*Counselling grew out of the ordinary desire to help other human beings who are distressed. These inspirations are still active in the modern profession but are no longer sufficient to ground our activities in the common intellectual traditions of the professions with which ours overlap, especially the health sciences and the social sciences.* (Buckroyd, 2005)

She goes on to articulate the importance of publishing research as a base with which to interact not only with other disciplines but with stakeholders such as the funders of counselling and managers of counselling services. She notes that *CPR* has been developed to assist with informing practitioners of the research evidence for what they do and most importantly to link researcher and practitioner, making research interesting and comprehensible and enlarging awareness of the literature on a wide range of areas. She talks about developing 'research-aware' practitioners.

There has been much discussion lately about evidence-based practice. We prefer the idea of evidence-informed or evidence-engaged practice. This suggests a more dynamic interaction between research and practice, and acknowledges the role each one of us has to become active participants in our own practice from a position of inquiry and knowledge.

The lead article in this *Journal*, *A Discursive Approach to the Registration Debate: Working with Texts; Thinking Ethics* by Sue Cornforth, links strongly with these ideas.

The paper applies a critical, postmodern, discursive look at the registration debate by examining two relevant documents: the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003) and the New Zealand Association of Counsellors' Code of Ethics (2002). As the debate over registration continues, this article shifts the analysis to another level and asks some critical questions about the paradigms and assumptions behind the issues. Through a critical examination of language, it challenges us to think about the varying positions that may be driving the debate, while keeping the focus on ethics.

Ada Crowe's *Guidance and Counselling in New Zealand Secondary Schools: Exploring the Issues* reflects on the changes to the role of school counsellors over the past forty years. She reflects on the changes in the nature of the social, educational, cultural, emotional, spiritual and psychological problems that students bring to school and their increased complexity. At the same time, the school counsellor's role has been moved from a specialist middle management role to a more *ad hoc* position with generally decreased time and emphasis. Crowe portrays a service that is overstretched and under pressure and highlights the need for an external agency, such as the Ministry of Education, to establish national guidelines and standards for this work.

A recent *Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal* called life coaching 'the new kid on the block' and challenged counsellors to both embrace and critique this emerging profession (Carroll, 2003). Brent Skerten and Linda Chapman's paper *Life Coaching and Counselling: Making Connections* acknowledges these tensions. It gives a snapshot of some aspects of life coaching by interviewing eight Christchurch life coaches and making some links between life coaching and counselling.

Andrew Smith's article, *Perceptions of Masculinity in the Transition to Manhood*, addresses a topic of considerable relevance to counsellors. The notion of masculinity in adolescence is one that interweaves with many issues. This paper examines the perceptions of adolescent males by interviewing a small sample of young males and discusses their experience of coming to manhood in the light of contemporary literature, particularly the area of spirituality.

We value highly the support and input of the reviewers, who have all put a lot of time and careful reflection into critiquing these papers. This issue we thank: Kathie Crocket, Hans Everts, Lyn James, Sue Mortlock, Sharman Robinson, Sue Sewell, John Tetley and Dick Wivell.

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**Sue Cornforth**

## References

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- Carroll, M. (2003). The new kid on the block. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal*, 14 (10): 28–31. **1**

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