**7th International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health**

**Pathways to Client Centred Care June 23-272013**

**University of Southern California USA**

[**www.pathways2013.com**](http://www.pathways2013.com)

Report by:

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The 7th International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health contained a number of presentation streams ranging from Client Groups in Health and Mental Health to Health Equity and Inequality and Destigmatization. All of them were united around the conference’s central theme of client centred practice. The two key messages that we took from the conference were:

* Current developments in social work practice have re-invigorated social work’s concern with client centred practice.
* Social work must do more to flag up and share the excellent and innovative practice that we undertake.

As Los Angeles Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas remarked: “It’s a mighty poor dog that doesn’t wag its own tail.”

Social work and ABI’s tail was well served with, for the first time, its own dedicated symposium held on 24th June consisting of 11 presentations:

Andy Mantell, UK Mental capacity and TBI

Lenore Hawley, USA The effect of volunteer activity on people with TBI

Grahame Simpson, Australia Evaluating the Strength 2 Strength program

Andy Mantell, UK Identifying the knowledge base for social work practice in TBI

Grahame Simpson Testing the fidelity and acceptability of the Window to Hope

Program

Grahame Simpson Investigating the model of case management

Elly Nadorp, Canada Improving the transition experience from hospital to community

Emma Weeks, New Zealand Promoting the inclusion of indigenous clients

Jane Stretton, Canada Metric tools of the trade (presented by Cathie Percival)

Patti Simonson, UK Investigating social work interventions to address the long term

needs of people with acquired brain injury

Elly Nadorp, Canada Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy

(see the BISWG website for the full presentations).

The Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Centre was one of the field trips for the conference ably hosted by the Director of Clinical Social Work, Charmaine Dorsey. It included a series of advanced practice skills workshops for social workers in ABI lead by Grahame Simpson:

Grahame Simpson Evidence-base for social work practice in acquired brain injury: Results of a systematic review

Lenore Hawley Group interactive structured treatment (GIST): a social competence intervention for individuals with ABI.

Grahame Simpson Building resilience in families supporting relatives with traumatic brain injury

These workshops were a real joy enabling the speakers to explore their subjects in more detail and providing much greater insight into these aspects of practice.

Attending seminars at large international conferences is always a bit like eating a packet of Revels; you may be rewarded with the toffee or you may get the dreaded orange centre. As with Revels, most sessions were rewarding, with some stand out gems such as Dr Bengt Westerberg’s enlightening exploration of Sweden’s experience of the development of social assistance for people with disabilities. A few were perhaps too descriptive or overloaded with detail. However, the ABI stream really stood out as consistently accessible and rigorous. It was well supported by conference members from a wide range of backgrounds – perhaps we will have encouraged a few more people to help wag social work’s tail!

The 8th International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health will be held in Singapore in 2016. Contact Grahame Simpson [Grahame.Simpson@sswahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Grahame.Simpson@sswahs.nsw.gov.au) or Patti Simonson [psimonson@rhn.org.uk](mailto:psimonson@rhn.org.uk) for further information.