

e-Interview



Dr Emma Stanton combines her role as chief executive of Beacon UK with practising psychiatry at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. From 2010 to 2011, Emma was a Commonwealth Fund Harkness Fellow in Health Care Policy and Practice and she is now a senior associate at the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School, USA, where she researched the value-based approach to healthcare delivery. She is a former

advisor to England's chief medical officer, Professor Sir Liam Donaldson, and co-founded Diagnosis, a clinical leadership social enterprise. Emma holds an executive MBA from Imperial College London. Her publications include *Clinical Leadership: Bridging the Divide* (with Claire Lemer and James Mountford, Quay Books, 2009) and *MBA for Medics* (with Claire Lemer, Radcliffe, 2010).

What are you working on today?

I am talking to a clinical commissioning group about how they can adopt a more outcomes-based approach to commissioning mental healthcare. This is what Beacon UK is set up to help NHS commissioners and providers think about to improve value in mental healthcare.

What is your idea of a perfect mental health service?

It would be fully integrated across the whole of health and social care, not in its own silo or flirting around the edges of acute care, as many liaison psychiatry models do. Crucially, it would involve systematic and robust outcomes measurement. In addition, I am an advocate of employers playing a much greater role in proactively improving their employees' mental health. Finally, we have only just begun to scratch the surface of what digital healthcare can offer to improve mental health.

Which psychiatrist, living or dead, do you most admire?

I recently read a book called *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain. For many reasons, including his development of the concepts of the introverted and extraverted personality, I greatly admire the psychiatrist Carl Jung. I continue to learn all the time from some terrific living psychiatrists too, including Dr Martin Baggaley at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and Dr Matthew Patrick, CEO at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. Both of these psychiatrists are inspiring clinical leaders and valued mentors to me.

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

From 2005 to 2006, I was a watch leader on the round-the-world yacht race. This involved over 9 months at sea competing in a 37 000-mile circumnavigation on board a 68-foot yacht. It was an incredible, and often dangerous, adventure. I learnt a great deal about what it means to be in an effective team, to be mentally and physically resilient and determined about achieving your goals.

What has been your most controversial idea?

Following a year in the USA as a Commonwealth Fund Harkness Fellow, I decided to combine completing my psychiatry training with being CEO of Beacon UK. Beacon UK is the subsidiary of

Beacon US, a managed mental healthcare company. My vision for Beacon is to apply a more data-driven approach to inform NHS commissioning decisions for people with mental illness and also those with multimorbidities. Not all of my senior colleagues supported this career decision. Personally, I have never doubted it as I am confident about the contribution that I can make in the UK via Beacon. I am also an advocate of encouraging trainees to gain broader experience of healthcare beyond the NHS. I believe this brings much-needed fresh thinking and leadership skills back into the profession and the system.

What frustrates you most about working in psychiatry?

I am frustrated when mental health is marginalised. As psychiatrists, we have a responsibility to engage more constructively and proactively with acute care and primary care colleagues.

Who would you most like to have dinner with and why?

I would love to have dinner with Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, because she is a terrific and inspiring female leadership role model. I encourage all readers to watch her TED talk: 'Why we have too few women leaders' (available at www.ted.com).

What single thing would improve the quality of your work?

The work I am leading for Beacon UK relies on data. Having access to a more reliable mental health data-set that also corresponds to physical health data would make a massive difference to how we can drive improvements in healthcare.

What is the most important lesson that working with those with mental illness has taught you?

That it can happen to any one of us.

If you could graduate again tomorrow, how would your career path be different?

Spending a year sailing is an atypical career path but I wouldn't change that. If anything, I would probably go on more adventures from an earlier stage in my career.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

My biggest disappointment is that my father is no longer around. Despite all of the marvels of modern medicine, his early-onset Alzheimer's dementia was unstoppable and brutal in its pace of neuronal destruction. I will always wish there was more that I could have done for him and for my mother, his primary caregiver.

What was the last book you read?

Like many psychiatrists, I love biographies. I recently read Steve Jobs' biography. It is long, but a fascinating insight into an iconic individual. I am also an Apple addict, which made it even more interesting to learn about the man behind the brand.

What are non-tweeting psychiatrists missing?

You know how at conferences and presentations the most interesting bit is often during a 'Q and A' session at the end? Well, I think Twitter is a bit like that. Admittedly, there is a substantial amount of superfluous nonsense on Twitter but I think it is equally possible to tune in to some fascinating debates. If you are intrigued, I am @doctorepreneur.

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