

Anniversary Medal



Dr Ruth Mayall

I first met Ruth about a decade ago when I sought her advice about how to manage addicted doctors. I was at the time just starting my sick doctor service and I had been told she was an expert. She was, but so much more than that. She offered not just expertise, but also reached out to the patients I was seeing. Holding their hands as they came to terms with their addiction and walked them (sometimes quite literally) to their appointments and 12 step meetings.

Dr Ruth Mayall has worked tirelessly in the difficult field of addiction, especially addiction amongst anaesthetists. She has lived experience of this and uses her own story of addiction and depression to help overcome the enormous stigma of mental illness in doctors. She tells her story, and in the telling, offers hope to others still too ashamed to seek help. She has personally rescued many doctors and helped them rescue their lives and their careers.

Instead of seeing her own difficulties as a source of embarrassment, she has used what she learned as a springboard to becoming a trustee with The Sick Doctors' Trust and is an active member of the British Doctors' & Dentists' support Group.

A strong believer in peer support, she has the most amazing network of anaesthetists and other doctors in recovery; if you refer her a 50yr old alcoholic consultant in Southend or an opiate addicted trainee in Leeds, she will know another one nearby and put them in touch. She will accompany anaesthetists for moral support at GMC hearings. Recognising the impact these have on people, she regularly rings round the 'flock' to see how everyone is doing. She describes herself as 'a bit overwhelmed' at receiving the award, commenting that 'It is such a joy to see an initially sick & fearful person with no hope get well again and get back to work'.

She, more so than most people, recognises that once it takes hold, addiction is a health issue needing health interventions to address. She has lobbied for suitable services for doctors - and her lobbying certainly added voice to helping secure funding for my service.

Her openness about her own addiction has led to many invitations to lecture on this topic, raising awareness of its importance, impact and successful management. She describes her own contribution as modest, acting as a signpost helping others with addiction problems as others helped her with her own addictions over 20 years ago now. In reality, she is one of the UK's experts in this field.

Over the years, Ruth has become a friend. Someone who I can ring for advice and help with difficult patients. She is generous with her time, always giving to others more than she takes herself. She has the amazing quality of making me feel I am doing her a favour by asking her to help me! I am delighted her work is at last being recognised by the Association and she deserves this accolade enormously.

Prof Clare Gerada

Medical Director, NHS Practitioner Health Programme



**Association
of Anaesthetists**