
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT**The Socrates Cafe: Philosophy as an integrated therapeutic tool in social
care settings**17th International Conference on Integrated Care, Dublin, 08-10 May 2017Michael Francis Brophy¹, Carmel Gallagher²

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My generation (born 1946) will have longer and better lives. We are not equal entering into this experience. In these late years we pay the price for past mistakes and negligence, placing greater demands on healthcare resources.

The challenge of ageing well means more than a balanced lifestyle, a good diet, exercise and sleep. It involves not only the body but also the soul. The psychological, spiritual and philosophical dimensions of old age as components of integrated healthcare are often ignored. There is an argument that philosophy is, in fact, one of the keys to a happy old age.

Every old person has no choice as to whether or not he/she is a philosopher. Every old person operates out of some philosophical world view, well-formed or incomplete or somewhere in between; unreflectively absorbed from the culture around them or built on critical questioning and sustained thought, or a mixture of both.

A Socrates Café is an innovative discussion forum which facilitates community philosophy, taking it out of universities and academia. Community philosophy provides a process which enables people to talk to and listen to each other. It brings the benefits of philosophy to informal settings and everyday life and seeks to develop mutual learning in a caring and collaborative context.

The Socrates Café at Clareville provides an opportunity for intellectual challenge and learning within a day care setting. It is broadly based on the Socratic method of questioning one's ideas and values and the perceived benefits of open and free discussion. An eclectic range of philosophical perspectives are drawn on to promote reflection and discussion including Aristotle's ideas about the habits and practices that promote human flourishing, Viktor Frank's writings on resilience and elements of Positive Psychology which are incorporated into reflective exercises which the facilitator uses from time to time.

Outcomes from the Café include the enhancement of individual well-being and the promotion of social integration among the participants, mental and emotional stimulation, affirmation and social recognition, developing virtues of tolerance and understanding, opportunity for reflection and new learning experiences, and integration in concentric circles of relationships

linking with wider communities. Above all it has impacted on the scourge of loneliness experienced by the participants in an urban environment. In addition the social and communal nature of the learning involved in the Café helped to create the conditions for the participants' own inclusion and added value to the work of Clareville day centre as an organisation.

A key element in the success of the Socrates Cafe is the culture and ethos of Clareville itself where human flourishing is the core value, where a robust community model is cultivated and where the work is underpinned by a belief that both staff and service users should be engaged in continuous learning in a collaborative and respectful way. The example of the Socrates café at Clareville provides encouragement and also challenges for other health and social care practitioners in the development of integrated healthcare in the broadest sense.

Keywords: philosophy; learning; wellbeing; lonlieness; inclusion
