

A Compassionate Reformulation of 'Death by Indifference'

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Background Information

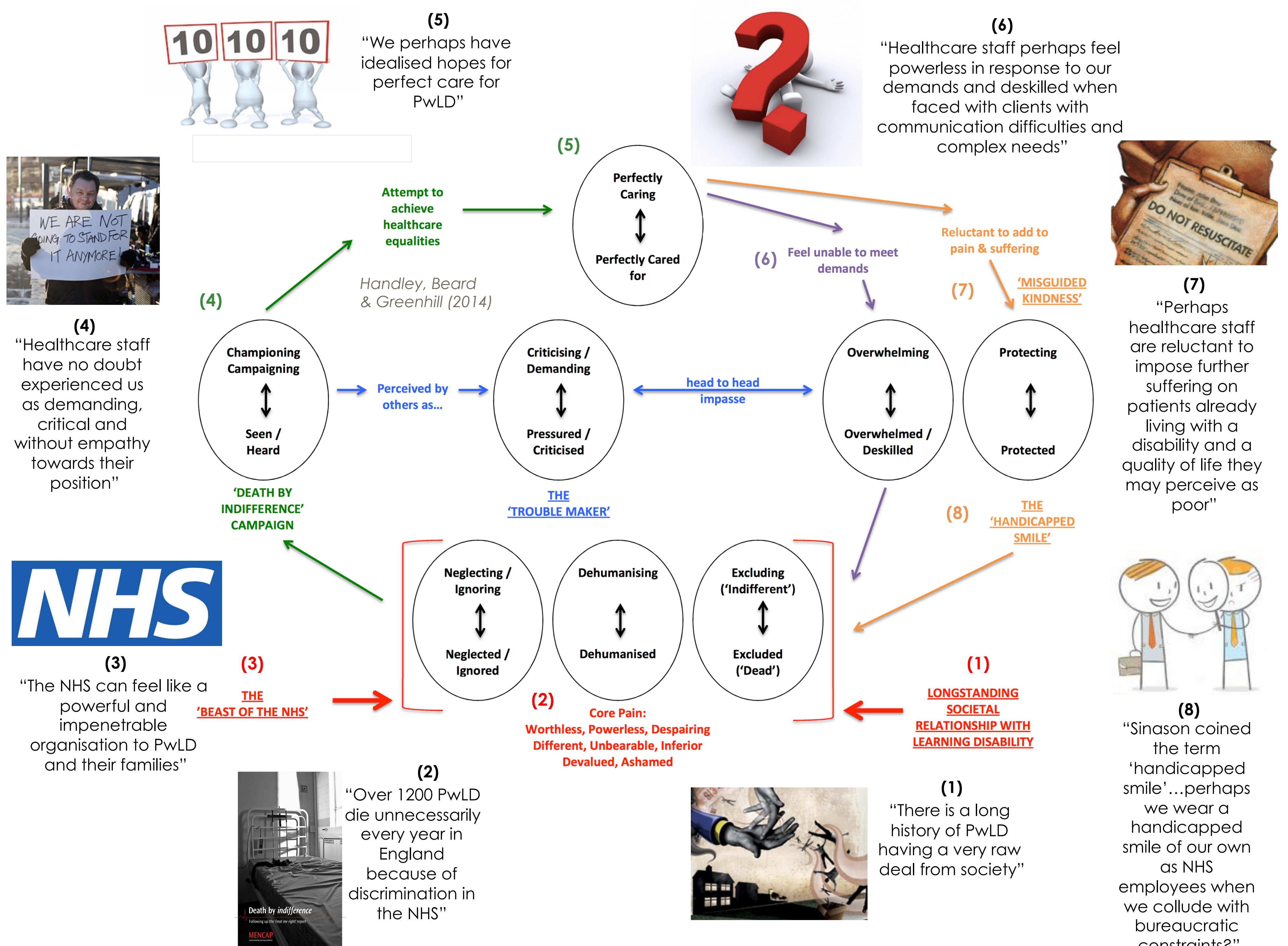
- Men with LD die on average 13 years sooner than men in the general population.
- Women with LD die on average 20 years sooner than women in the general population.
- Mencap launched a 'death by indifference' campaign in 2007 which attributed premature deaths to health inequalities & institutional discrimination experienced by PwLD in the NHS.
- Contributing factors include: lack of basic care, poor communication, delays in diagnosis & treatment, failure to recognise pain, misuse of DNR & flawed best interest processes.
- Despite numerous government reports and 40 years of awareness amongst professionals, the death toll continues to rise.

What can Psychology contribute to this impasse?

"In our clinical work we should ensure that... we attend to the ultimate as well as the intimate causes...we should speak up as a profession...adding our professional witness to the public dialogue"

The approach we took:

- Potential themes & relational dynamics were identified from academic, personal & professional sources.
- These were used to develop a psychological formulation to more fully understand the factors maintaining this impasse.



Conclusions

- The formulation introduces a more compassionate narrative about the factors maintaining health inequalities for pWLD.
- It highlights the importance of reflecting on and recognising our own positions and their potential consequences.
- The term 'death by indifference' does not do justice to the complexity of the situation and may inadvertently perpetuate the problem.
- As Psychologists we have many transferable skills which can be used creatively to affect change on many levels.

Invitation into ongoing dialogue: What can you do?

"I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realised I am somebody"

What one thing could you commit to doing differently?

- Within your clinical work?
- Within your organisation?
- Within your profession &/or professional body?
- By influencing policy & legislation?