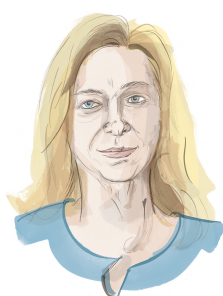




OBSERVATIONS

BMJ CONFIDENTIAL

Henrietta Bowden-Jones: Extrovert, optimistic, driven

**What was your earliest ambition?**

From primary school age I was an avid reader and also loved Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* cartoons, which I think shaped not only my career path but also my approach to life. Every human problem appears in the comic strip at some point. Lucy became a role model, as I liked her energy and vitality: I decided to become a psychiatrist after reading endless cartoons of her in her little wooden stall, a large "The psychiatrist is in" sign above her head, dispensing advice to friends and acquaintances.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

Not one single person but a collection of about four or five, who have all excelled as medics nationally and internationally. They maintained high professional standards and a burning desire to learn, which was infectious. They all exhibited the nurturing side of great team leaders and found time to inspire junior colleagues not just to do the job well but to seek more than what was expected. The biggest inspiration probably came from my visit to Stuart Turner's Trauma Clinic in central London almost 20 years ago. I left his office dazzled by the concept of this centre of excellence filled with hardworking, motivated people, and the idea really appealed to me. Although much of the practical inspiration for my national clinic came from the United States and Canada, I think the original seed for the idea was sown back then, right at the start of my psychiatric career.

What was your best career move?

Two come to mind, both equally important: the first was moving to the United Kingdom from Italy to train in psychiatry, do my junior doctor years and membership exams, and later do a neuroscience MD at Imperial College. I loved the meritocracy of the British system where you succeed if you are good, regardless of gender and ethnicity. As vice president of the Medical Women's Federation I have become more aware of

gender issues and see that not all of my medical colleagues were so lucky, but certainly in psychiatry and neuroscience in London the egalitarian approach was the norm. My other best move was founding the National Problem Gambling Clinic, which remains the only designated NHS clinic in the country for treating pathological gamblers. I started working on the project about nine years ago, and the first patient was seen in 2008. We have now treated thousands of patients and their relatives.

Who is the person you would most like to thank and why?

Throughout my early medical career in the UK I was mentored by William Shanahan, one of the best clinicians in addiction psychiatry this country has seen. I met him when I was a senior house officer at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, when he came to talk to us juniors about his work with addictions. He spent much of the seminar talking about a recent trip to Colombia, where he had come across drug barons and had ventured into drug taking populations to understand the effect on their lives and families. By the end of the talk I was hooked. He later became my consultant and eventually my clinical director at the NHS trust we worked in. His love of the subject led me to become passionate about treating addictions.

If you were given £1m what would you spend it on?

I'd keep the money in a high interest account and use the interest to set up two prizes. One would be the art of science prize, given to one artist each year who has conveyed a scientific concept through art that manages to remain stunning and challenging. The second would be for scientists who inadvertently achieve beauty in their work—for example, the DNA double helix can be perceived as a work of art in its perfection.

Where are or were you happiest?

In a tiny medieval village in Italy where I grew up during the summers and where I still go regularly to reconnect with the sea and the Italian way of life. In a village where three generations of close family friends all share a simple life of coffee, newspapers, and swimming, it's easy to forget the professional pressures of London life.

Biography

Henrietta Bowden-Jones, 50, is founder and director of the National Problem Gambling Clinic, the NHS's first multidisciplinary treatment centre for pathological gamblers, and is the Royal College of Psychiatrists' spokesperson on behavioural addictions. With a prevalence of 0.9% problem gambling is estimated to affect about 400 000 people in this country, and many more are at risk. As consultant psychiatrist and honorary senior lecturer at Imperial College London's division of brain sciences she also runs a research group investigating the neurobiology and aetiology of gambling addiction. She is vice president of the Medical Women's Federation and has edited two textbooks on pathological gambling, published in early 2015. In 2014 she won the Women in the City award for health.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

Clinically speaking, atypical antipsychotics have allowed millions of patients to live in the community without the stigma of significant extrapyramidal side effects that marked them out as mentally ill, even when they were in remission. However, brain neuroimaging techniques have truly revolutionised our field, so they possibly come first in terms of historical relevance.

What book should every doctor read?

Two have left their mark, although I read them decades ago: *Notes of an Anatomist* by F González-Crussi and *A Country Doctor's Notebook* by Mikhail Bulgakov.

What poem, song, or passage of prose would you like mourners at your funeral to hear?

I'd choose two that I included in my choices on BBC Radio 3's *Private Passions* programme in January this year. One is "Thy hand Belinda . . . when I am laid in earth," sung by Kirsten Flagstad in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The second is *La Barcheta* by Reynaldo Hahn, with Julius Drake on piano and sung by Matthew Polenzani.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Taking time out at weekends to exercise; I love it and look forward to it. It is total "me" time and therefore not as nurturing to my family as playing with the children, but as they grow up I feel less bad about it. If you run for long enough it takes you into a meditative state that facilitates creative thinking: the idea for my blog www.theartofscience.com came during a particularly long run by the water.

Clarkson or Clark? Would you rather watch *Top Gear* or *Civilisation*? What television programmes do you like?

Television plays a very small role in my life, as I tend to spend a lot of my evenings either out with friends, at home reading or listening to operas on Radio 3, or working on projects. I do, however, watch *Downton Abbey* whenever it's on, and I've seen every *Breaking Bad* episode.

What is your most treasured possession?

A tiny gold pendant of a pilot cutter sailing boat. My husband gave it to me when I had to sell the real thing—a three tonne classic boat I had bought from Scotland with great enthusiasm, but which turned out to be too large and time consuming to look after because of our busy London lives.

What, if anything, are you doing to reduce your carbon footprint?

I walk everywhere or take public transport despite having a specific parking space assigned in central London when I took up my consultant job. I gave up the space, saying it was going to harm my health, and I've never regretted it.

What personal ambition do you still have?

I have just become vice president of the Medical Women's Federation, and one of my ambitions is to increase the membership. We will celebrate 100 years in 2017, and I aim to enrol another 200 women by then. We exist to support female doctors at all levels of their careers (anyone interested should email me at h.bowdenjones@imperial.ac.uk). I have other ambitions too numerous to mention, but they all focus on making life easier for people with mental illness and addiction problems.

Summarise your personality in three words

Extrovert, optimistic, driven. All in equal, large amounts.

Where does alcohol fit into your life?

I am an addictions psychiatrist, and for many years I ran the Central and North West London NHS's detox beds for alcohol dependent patients. Having treated hundreds of people whose lives have been ruined by it, I tend to think of alcohol in clinical terms and in terms of the suffering it has caused to millions of children across the world who have grown up with alcoholic parents—so alcohol is not something I speak lightly about. Minimum pricing and reduced availability are approaches that I support.

What is your pet hate?

Badly written novels sold in airports.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

Fresh tomatoes from the Ligurian soil, pecorino cheese from Tuscany, and watermelon to finish, all to remind me of my Italian origins. And a hot chocolate—a particularly large one, if it is to be my last.

Do you have any regrets about becoming a doctor and academic?

When I think about my career choice and subsequent professional life journey I experience an intense sense of belonging, an emotion akin to joy that is deeply rooted in my sense of identity. The first time I remember feeling like that was early in my first term at medical school: we used to cycle back through the narrow streets of the medieval town of Pavia, wearing our white lab coats and returning late from lectures,

excited by the idea that we were the new intake and would carry on the tradition of that venerable university. That sense of belonging to a profession has been with me ever since.

If you weren't in your present position what would you be doing instead?

Hard to answer, but I would probably have become a photographer. In my 20s and 30s I would have ventured into

war zones and areas of political conflict, throwing myself into my job just as I did with medicine.

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