

Author: Dr Philip Kavanagh

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Dolores O’Riordan died the day that I was discharged from hospital. One of my happiest teenage memories is listening to a Cranberries’ album with my cousin on a rare sunny summer evening so there is something sadly ironic for me that its lead singer should pass away on the day when I was at the lowest point in my life.

I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression aged 16 and although there were some very tough days, overall for the next 15 years I flourished. So, when the first jolt hit, I carried on. I went to work every day. I never missed my call. Then barely three months later, a larger jolt hit and delivered a complete body blow. I carried on and I was supporting my family not just as a son or brother but as a doctor. Four days later I was back at work. Even when the final jolt struck, X days/weeks/months later, I managed to carry on for another two weeks until, on a Sunday, the enormity of the previous six months came crashing down around me. By Sunday evening I was back in hospital but this time as a patient.

I took time out of the BST and spent it not just coming to terms with the events that led to my admission, but also dealing with a profound sense of failure – a feeling that I did not have the stamina to pursue a pressurized career like medicine. Quitting the BST and medicine were serious options and discussed at length. During those months, my family and friends reached out to me, and after a time I was able to reach out to others including occupational health in both RCPI and my hospital. I realized that I had lost sight of all the things that kept me happy and healthy – my resilience.

A chronic illness is personal. The stigma around depression makes this even more so. After over 20 years of holding it all in, I understand why many prefer to stay quiet. However, it’s important to remember that most of us became doctors because we care. That care does not end once the ward round is over. Don’t be afraid and don’t be embarrassed. There will always be a friendly ear, there will always be someone who understands and there will always be a solution.

I have depression and anxiety, I have a disability and I am ‘well able’ to work in medicine.