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# Shawshank Redemption and Unpalatable Messages: The Wellbeing of Feedback Professionals

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## Abstract

The study presents an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the wellbeing of healthcare feedback professionals. Nine participants engaging with patient feedback were interviewed and explain that others *just don't get* what their role entails. The vivid metaphor of Shawshank Redemption is used to describe their change agent role as *changing a super tanker's direction*. Feeling undervalued, most have experienced a *breaking point*; yet in spite of the challenges, their passion for their work is evident—perhaps *this is a vocation and I wana do it*.

## Introduction

### Context

- Political context has changed: coalition government
- New Department of Health policies
- NHS restructuring



Front line customer service intermediaries  
Between patients and organisations  
Highlight gaps in the quality and safety of services

**Theoretical Framework:** Wellbeing (Danna & Griffin, 1999)

### Preconceptions

- Emotional demands
- Underappreciated

### Research Question

*How is the wellbeing of FP in healthcare?*

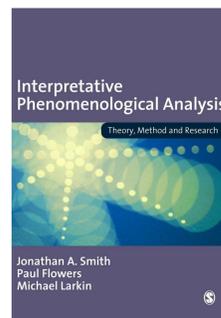
### Contribution

Feedback professionals (FP) perform a critical role within the NHS however little is known about their experiences at work and how these may impact on their wellbeing—first study to investigate this.

## Methodology

### Aim

Gain in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences (Willig, 2008)



### IPA Approach

Enter phenomenon experienced by participant  
See it through their eyes  
Aware that understanding based on own interpretations  
Reflexivity

### Sample

Purposive sample of nine FP in healthcare

### Data Analysis

- Interviews transcribed
- Analysed according to Smith et al (2009)
- Iterative

## Findings

<p><b>Theme: "they just don't get it"</b></p> <p>"People don't get it, they just don't GET it" (Alicia:244)</p>	<p>"People come in and say 'you killed my mother, you killed my mother', I've never seen your mother, but they put a photograph of somebody on the desk and say 'and this is the person, so I don't want you to forget who this person is'" (Julie:122)</p>		<p>"in many ways my job is about bringing back unpalatable messages" (Patrick:265).</p> <p>In order to face patients you put on "a mould" (Pauline:732) which Laura describes as a "plastic smile" (585)</p>	<p>"the Trust doesn't realise just how much we are absorbing" (Pauline: 278)</p> <p>I am an "outside toilet" (Julie:781)</p> <p>"What have I done? Is it me?" (Alicia:155).</p>
<p><b>Theme: "breaking point"</b></p> <p>"I do get stressed and it's noticeable in my sick record" (Adam: 144)</p>		<p>Patrick refers to Shawshank Redemption and explains "I am the rock hammer, yeah it chips away, uses the rock hammer for 20 years to chip his way out. That's what it feels like. It's like <i>chip, chip, chip-ping</i> away all the time" (288).</p> <p>I would "come out the house and get to the bottom of the road and walk back home. I'd be in tears, I just couldn't go in [to work]" (Alicia: 49).</p>	<p>"Maybe they're right, I am useless" (Julie:781)</p>	
<p><b>Theme: "this is a vocation and I wana do it"</b></p>	<p>Pauline forms strong relationships with some of the patients, she calls them "my little boys", while Adam argues "they're not just a complainant or you know a PALS issue".</p>	<p>"it makes you more Machiavellian [...] one becomes more adept at ticking boxes and putting a spin".</p>	<p>Changing the NHS is like "changing a super tanker's direction" (Adam)</p> <p>"I'm not Paul Daniels, I can't pull it out of a hat" (Patrick:350)</p> <p><b>Theme: "changing a super-tanker's direction"</b></p>	

## Discussion

- FP are rich source of patient feedback on service quality & safety
- Findings show low levels of wellbeing
- Implications on organisation (e.g., absenteeism, ticking boxes) & individual (e.g., strain)
- Also important is passion - much more than customer service
- Transferability of findings to organisations with similar roles (e.g., complaints department, governing bodies such as OfCom)

## References

- Danna, K. & Griffin, R. (1999) Health and wellbeing in the workplace: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Journal of Management*, 25 (3), 357-384 doi: 10.1177/014920639902500305
- Smith, J.A.; Flowers, P.; & Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Willig, C. (2008) *Introducing Qualitative Methods in Psychology*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

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