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HEARTS IN HEALTHCARE

**Compassion Hero:
Dr Johanne Egan**

19 May 2018

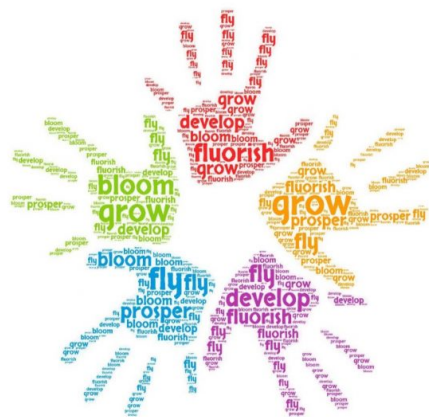
...nble a battleground, more than a
place of healing. Learn how this inspiring New Zealand doctor
transformed her ER into a place of joy, compassion and flourishing.



Dr Johanne Egan
Emergency Medicine
Senior Medical Officer

Dr Johanne Egan is a senior medical officer in the Emergency Department of North Shore Hospital in Auckland, the biggest city in New Zealand.

She begins her story, "This is a story of joy, of hope and of compassion in clinical medicine. It is a curious questioning of what encourages us to thrive in the Emergency Department. This story is about re-igniting the passion for our chosen profession and accentuating the positive in the hope that this might enable us to harvest this gold for our own and our patients' wellbeing."



She goes on, "The Emergency Department is a melting pot of almost every aspect of humanity. It can be a place of pain, disease, despair and death. It can be a place of overloaded systems where increasing patient numbers and need can overwhelm available staffing, technological and physical resources.

Much of this overshadows other truths about the Emergency Department. That it is also a place of care, of compassion and of excellence where many acts of kindness and genuine heroism occur every day.

It can be a place of deeply meaningful connection, of achievement and joy in learning and teaching. These positive aspects align well with discoveries from diverse fields of the key components of living a life beyond merely surviving, one of thriving.



This research project explores and accentuates the positive parts of life within the Emergency Department in the hope that this may foster thriving and excellence. This was done through a process called Appreciative Inquiry.

This methodology utilises four stages to

draw out the best of our system and to incorporate these discoveries into dreams for the future. The next steps design practical and realistic ways of reaching those dreams and embed these designs within the system. Using interviews, storytelling, small group discussions



and workshops, as many members of the Emergency Department staff as possible were involved; nurses, doctors, health care assistants and ward clerks."

Johanne's report on the project is available for download here: ([Thriving in the ER](#)). It's a stunning piece of work, beautifully written, profusely illustrated, and extremely well referenced. Although the work forms part of a doctoral thesis, the report is not an academic work – it's a joyful and compelling account of how one workplace was transformed to a place of happy thriving. Not only does Johanne draw on all the latest findings in positive psychology, she puts them to work in a way that brings out the very best in people.

With her teammates, she explores what all these dimensions can mean in the workplace:

- Appreciation and gratitude
- Self-care
- Having fun
- Knowledge and wisdom
- Shared achievement
- Shared humanity, kindness and compassion
- Human connection
- Making a difference



This inspiring report doesn't just tell us how one Emergency Department managed to thrive, it tells us exactly how we can achieve the same. In these days of stress, overwork and burnout – when so many health workers are feeling overburdened and exhausted – this project is a shining beacon of hope. Johanne Egan truly is our compassion hero.



Johanne is happy for her report to be shared widely. You can download it from this link: [Thriving in the ER](#)

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2 Responses to “Compassion Hero: Dr Johanne Egan”

Stephanie Watson says:

[May 22, 2018 at 1:43 pm](#)

This is a lovely/refreshing transformation from chaos and trauma to compassion and care. Well done and my sincere congratulations at leading this challenge and letting us all in on how we can all thrive in the ED environment. I look forward to sharing this with all of those around me.

Regards Stephanie Watson

Peta Joyce says:

[May 21, 2018 at 11:56 am](#)

Really love this account – especially the graphics, many thanks for sharing. Appreciative inquiry is one of my favourite ways of working, and what you did shows just how transformative it can be.

Many thanks, Peta

“When all members of an organization are motivated to understand and value the most favourable features of its culture, it can make rapid improvements.”

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