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## “The Train Keeps a’Rollin” ... 10 Years Later

By Kieran McCartan, Ph.D., David Prescott, LICSW, & Kasia Uzieblo, Ph.D.

In the UK we do not have high school reunions, they seem to be something quite American or reserved for 80’s movies; but if this blog had a reunion, this post might be it.

Ten years ago, in July 2010, Robin Wilson started the blog with the blessing of Maia Christopher and James Cantor as a way of continuing the public and professional outreach of ATSA and its journal, *Sexual Abuse*. The blog was to be a platform for discussing, via concise messaging, the main issues, challenges, and progress of the sexual abuse research and treatment field. The aim of the blog was to be informative but critical in an accessible way. Whether the blog has accomplished that is for its readership to decide and comment on. What the blog *has* done is provide a commentary on the reality of sexual abuse for professionals and the public for 10 years. Just to give a behind-the-curtain snapshot: over this period we have produced 372 posts, averaging between 30 – 45 annually, with approximately half a million individual hits across the life of the blog, means that we average 200-250 hits per day, from across the world (although westernized, anglophone countries are where most of our readers come from).

Over the last 10 years, the blog has had a number of in-house writers (Robin Wilson, David Prescott, Jon Brandt, Kieran McCartan, Alissa Ackerman, and Kasia Uzieblo). We have also had a number of external writers, some invited and others who volunteered themselves or ideas (including Norbert Ralph, Michael Seto, Danielle Harris, Jill Levenson, Don Grubin, Tyffani Dent, Franca Cortoni, Joan Tabachnick, and Cordelia Anderson, to name a few as we have had over 30 contributors please do have a look at the back catalog to see who else has contributed ). In sum, the blog has had strong influences of practice, academic, and international approaches to it. Over the course of this period, we have covered topics, including risk assessment, treatment, polygraphy, residence restrictions, the (non-)impact of Halloween, myth-busting, desistance, re-offending, community reintegration, professional practice, prevention, individual and systematic issues (i.e., gender, race, vulnerability, etc), and policy. The blog has often reacted to current



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### **SAJRT Bloggers' Profile**

*We are longtime members of ATSA dedicated to furthering the causes of evidenced-based practice, understanding, and prevention in the field of sexual abuse.*

*The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy, and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are risk to abuse.*

*The views expressed on this blog are of the bloggers and are not necessarily those of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research & Treatment, or Sage Journals.*

affairs, as well as discussed ongoing debates in the field and society; we have never shied away from touchstone issues and won't going forward either.

So, as this is our anniversary, what has changed and what has not? We believe the public policy landscape in the USA and internationally has shifted somewhat. We also believe our field now discusses sexual abuse prevention even more than in the past. We have seen beginning increases in the use of person-first language in our communications, just as the field has started to take more of a client-centered approach. Finally, we are starting to see more nuanced public discussion in the media.

However, not everything has changed: we still see punitive policies, a fractured use of the evidence base, and emotion/ideology clouding the development of realistic policy and practice. Budgets are cut routinely, and professionals are expected to do more with less. Ten years on it feels like the deckchairs have been re-arranged when a wholesale redecoration is what has been needed.

This is not to say that there are no signs of hope for the future. The advent of the #metoo movement, increases in bystander intervention, corporate “wokeness”, the rise in awareness brought about by movements such as Black Lives Matter, increased victim advocacy, the debate surrounding the best ways to help people who are attracted to children and to prevent offending, and an increasing realization that sexual abuse is a (public) health issue, as well as a criminal justice one, mean that a new vision for the future is underway.

Change takes time and ours and related fields have a long way to go. On balance, it seems we are on the right path. Professionals need to keep emphasizing the importance of using the available evidence and making our knowledge and experience available to others as a concrete means of preventing as well as responding to sexual abuse. We also need to keep an open mind to new perspectives and learn from our colleagues in both westernized and non-westernized countries.

In ten years, the biggest strength to the blog has been the voice of contributors, both in-house and external, and to that end, we encourage anyone, and everyone from all around the world, to contribute. We are always open to new voices and perspectives. Here is to another 10 years, it's not an ending rather a marker on a never-ending journey!