

# On being open-minded: Healthcare practice and the art of being wrong

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# An open mind?

To slightly misquote Frank Zappa

“A mind is like a parachute. It only works when it’s open”

So what does it mean to have an open mind?

# An open mind?

“To be open-minded is to be open to the possibility that one might be wrong about – and consequently willing to amend - any one of one’s opinions, beliefs, values, commitments, views, and so on;

# An open mind?

“To be open-minded is to be open to the possibility that one might be wrong about – and consequently willing to amend - any one of one’s opinions, beliefs, values, commitments, views, and so on; however strongly those opinions, views, beliefs, values, commitments, and so on are held”. (Sellman, 2018, p. 1)

# An open mind?

“In the practice of nursing, open-mindedness would also seem to require that a nurse be open to the possibility that she or he may be wrong to act in such a such a way – and therefore willing to act differently – in any one of her or his actions,

# An open mind?

“In the practice of nursing, open-mindedness would also seem to require that a nurse be open to the possibility that she or he may be wrong to act in such a such a way – and therefore willing to act differently – in any one of her or his actions, at least where those actions arise from her or his opinions, beliefs, values, commitments, views, and so on; and at least where those actions are related to nursing practice” (Sellman, 2018, p. 1)

# Structure for today

- The nature of open-mindedness
- Common understandings of open-mindedness
- Limits to open-mindedness
- Open-mindedness - a professional virtue?
- Healthcare practice and open-mindedness

# The nature of open-mindedness



“the open-minded person is one who is able and willing to form an opinion, or revise it, in the light of evidence and argument”

(Hare, 1988, p. 123)



# The nature of open-mindedness

Properly understood, open-mindedness is a fundamental intellectual virtue that involves a willingness to take relevant evidence and argument into account in forming or revising our beliefs and values,

# The nature of open-mindedness

Properly understood, open-mindedness is a fundamental intellectual virtue that involves a willingness to take relevant evidence and argument into account in forming or revising our beliefs and values, especially when there is some reason why such evidence and argument might be resisted by the individual in question

(Hare, 2003, p. 76)

# Common understandings and misunderstandings of open-mindedness

- Keeping an open mind/The jury is out
- A closed mind?
- A mind too open?
- An empty mind?
- A mind without commitment?
- Holding opinions in an open-minded way

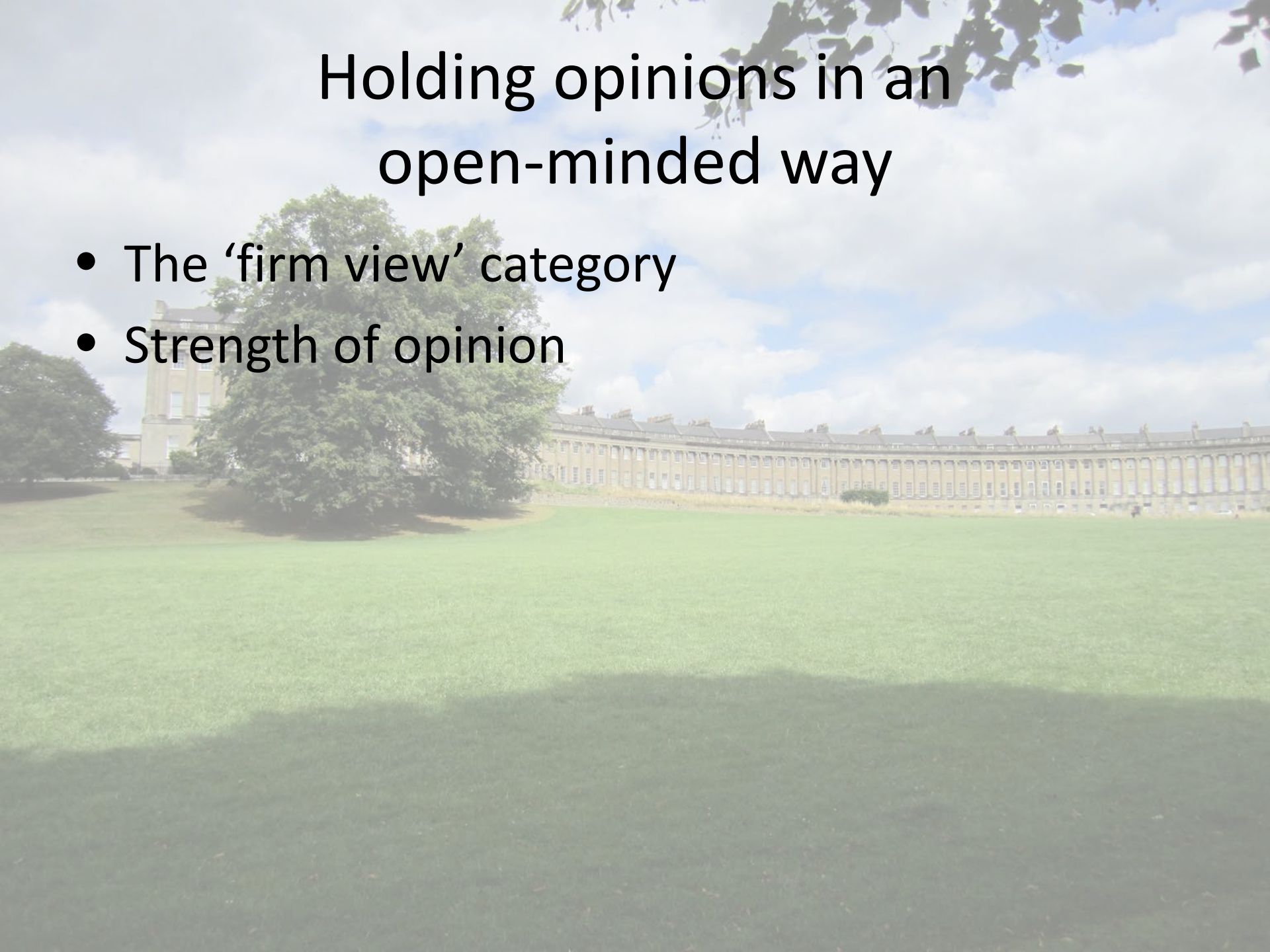
# Four categories of open-mindedness

- The 'insufficient evidence' category
- The 'not attended to' category
- The 'inconclusive' category
- The 'firm view' category

(Sellman, 2011)

# Holding opinions in an open-minded way

- The 'firm view' category
- Strength of opinion



# Limits to open-mindedness

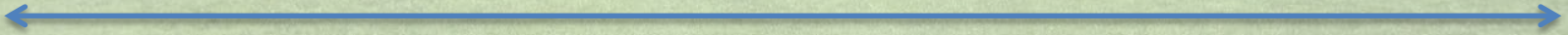
- Practical limit
- Rational limit
- Logical limit
- Moral limit

– (see Hare, 1985; Hare & McLaughlin 1994; Sellman, 2003, 2011)

# Open-mindedness as a professional virtue

Closed-  
mindedness

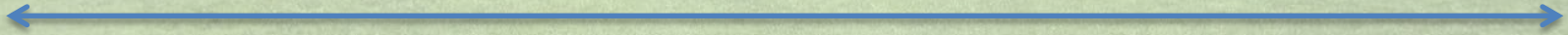
Open-  
mindedness



# Open-mindedness as a professional virtue

Closed-  
mindedness

Open-  
mindedness



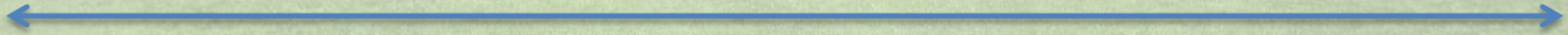


# Open-mindedness as a professional virtue

Closed-  
mindedness

Open-  
mindedness

Credulous-  
ness



# Healthcare practice and open-mindedness

- Evidence-based practice
- Tension between protocol and autonomous practice
- The closed-minded practitioner
- The credulous practitioner

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