

Background

Ever since Saunders' inspirational philosophy, it has been recognized that hospices should be a place that offers patients, families and staff opportunities for discovery, personal growth and a new sense of wellbeing. Growing evidence is demonstrating how the therapeutic art and design offers, in a unique way, opportunities to support patients, family and staff as an integrated part of health care.

The underpinning philosophy of utilising creative arts, within palliative care is the belief that:

- Everyone can create something of meaning and value through creative arts, not only the 'few talented'.
- A good quality of living includes artistic and creative experiences.

St Columba's Hospice has demonstrated a commitment to integrate creative and decorative art into its day to day practice. Through an exciting collaboration with the art organization GINKO and Creative Scotland, a five year Art Strategy has been developed.

The process of writing the strategy

1. Literature review of academic research and best practice

This demonstrated, through research evidence and practice based projects, the positive impact that art and design has on health such as:

- Enhancing adaptation and acceptance (Smith 2002)
- Enhancing wellbeing and quality of life of patients, staff and visitors (Lawson & Phiri 2003)
- Reducing symptoms such as fatigue and pain as well as stress (Nainis 2006, Palmer 1999)

2. A five month consultation period with the hospice staff, patients and volunteers included:

Series of one-to-one conversations as well as open 'Drop in Day', held with staff and volunteers.



This highlighted the need and appropriateness in relation to art as well as experience and ideas that shaped the art strategy.

An afternoon workshop for the hospice arts committee as well as a seminar day open to all staff and volunteers with a professional Edinburgh artist and representatives from cultural organizations.



This inspired the art committee to think about different kinds of artwork and art based activities that could become part of the practice within the hospice.

A test workshop for day care patients with support from artist Alexander Hamilton whereby patients made cyanotype prints using plants collected in the hospice garden.



The feedback highlighted an extremely positive experience with great sense of achievement as the patients producing beautiful work that will be displayed in the hospice. Staff reported that the patients were being more interactive and having more animated conversations.

Implementing the strategy

The strategy proposes a programme of activities that will offer:

- Appropriate therapeutic engagement for patients, families and staff.
- A social programme, designed to bring the wider community into the hospice building and grounds. This will help to reduce stigma and to ensure that the hospice becomes an accessible, lively and interesting part of the local community.



How will we know if/how this works!

Research evaluation will be undertaken of all projects in order to support further build up of the evidence base and evaluate impact.

What we will achieve with the strategy:

- Permanent public art elements for sensitive spaces enhancing a therapeutic environment.
- Space within the hospice exhibiting patients' and artists' work.
- Event programme attracting the public into the hospice.
- Therapeutic art as part of hospice activities for staff, patients and families.
- Long term partnership with arts organizations and link with the local professional creative community.

References

- Lawson B. and Phiri M. (2003) The Architectural Healthcare Environment and its Effects on Patient Health Outcomes. South Downs Health, NHS Trust.
- Nainis N, Pace JA, Ramer L, With LH, Liu J, Short S. (2006) Relieving symptoms in cancer: innovative use of art therapy. Journal of pain and symptom management 31, 120, 162-169.
- Palmer J, Kahn C, Taylor C et al (1999) The effect of art on venipuncture induced stress. Society for the Arts in Healthcare, USA. www.societyforhealthcare.org, Duke University Medical Center 8.
- Smith R. (2002) Spend (slightly) less on health and more on the arts. British Medical Journal, 325, 1622.