

Art and health

Peter Senior, Director

Art now plays a significant part in health promotion and healthcare. Worldwide Creativity and Culture symbolize human existence and deepen our understanding of living, caring and dying. Creativity and Culture reflect the human spirit of all individuals and society, fostering a sense of place, establishing a greater feeling of wellbeing and confirming our way of life.

Arts for Health has been in existence for 12 years as a vehicle advocating and promoting the use of the arts in healthcare. It was established in response to recommendations made in the Attenborough Report "Arts and Disabled People."⁽¹⁾ We work with and unite, artists, designers and healthcare professionals to improve the quality of life for all those involved in providing and receiving health and community care. With over 27 years of experience working in the hospitals and healthcare settings in the United Kingdom and internationally, I can say with confidence that when the arts in their widest possible sense are linked with healthcare, they have a profoundly beneficial effect, providing of course that they are used appropriately, with sensitivity and professionalism. We have developed models of good practice, which include working with architects and planners on new buildings prior to their commencement, and working on refurbishments for existing buildings.

This National Centre is situated within the Faculty of Art and Design at the Manchester Metropolitan University. We have a close working relationship with the Departments of Architecture, Textiles, Fine Art, Communication Media, as well as with the research facilities associated with a large university of its kind.

The Centre has assisted Health Authorities, Hospitals and Community Trusts establish arts projects which result in proven practical benefits for staff, patients and public.

We seek opportunities to advise Government Ministers on arts and health policy, and provide advice and information to architects, health planners, artists and funding bodies.

By developing innovative art projects for all manner of health situations, we create employment for artists, arts administrators and arts graduates. Evidence of the value of this is well documented in many publications.

We undertake research projects into the positive and negative aspects of the arts and design quality in healthcare, and initiate a range of publications dealing with these issues.

In the future we will continue to press governments throughout the world to promote this work. We have already forged links with UNESCO, The World Health Organisation, and other national organisations like our own.

After 27 years Arts for Health has a wealth of documentary evidence, held as a national archive, which provides the basis for valuable



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Mr. Senior is director of Arts for Health in Manchester. This organization has been in force for over 11 years. Peter's involvement with the arts and health field spans over 26 years. While a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Polytechnic, he had over 15 years experience as the founder and director of Hospital Arts, Manchester; arts consultant to the DHSS and member of both the Attenborough Committee of Enquiry into Arts and Disabled People and the Carnegie Council (to promote and monitor developments following the Attenborough Report). In 1987 he received a National Art Collection Award for his 'outstanding contribution to the visual arts'.

research and academic study.

We will all be increasingly aware of the wealth of illustrations and documentation available of arts and health projects in many countries. The scale of what has been done is impressive and dramatic.

Most of these excellent examples are of art being used in the public spaces of hospitals, hospices and other healthcare buildings. What is now urgently needed is for arts and health projects to work closely with the relevant professionals to bring more art into patient areas, for example wards, day rooms, treatment rooms. These can be the most challenging areas to consider, for on the one hand the patient deserves the opportunity of a beautiful and cultured healthcare environment, but this is often in contrast to the needs of doctors and health care staff, for every kind of equipment and ward furniture.

It requires a high level of creativity and ingenuity and this is a real challenge.

After many years of promotion and practice in this field, we find the greatest need lies in the area of research and evaluation, and Arts for Health is respected, and well placed to respond to this need.

We intend to increase collaboration with other action based research to provide an evidence base for all interested parties.

Misunderstanding exists about what is appropriate and reputable research and evaluation. Studies of all kinds are being undertaken in many countries to highlight the healthcare benefits. Arts in healthcare projects should be monitored and evaluated from the start by skilled and experienced researchers, giving the research credibility and leaving the artists free to concentrate on the creative aspects of their work.

Arts for Health has recently completed what is believed to be the first independent evaluation of a major hospital arts project in the United Kingdom. 'The Exeter Evaluation' developed a method of assessment which can also be applied to the quality of the physical environment.

(2) This method and the new comparative data provides valuable feedback for designers, artists, clinical staff, managers and policy makers. Peter Scher will be presenting the results of this evaluation in the final session on Wednesday afternoon.

This study is the latest publication resulting from our developing research programme. Research continues into the quality of the healthcare environment for which the study "Patient-focused Architecture for Healthcare" by Peter Scher, has become a respected international reference on this subject. (3) It seeks to present healthcare and architecture in precise, but non-technical ways and bring them together in words and pictures. Among its many illustrations it highlights three examples of health buildings in the U.K. which can be described as Patient-Focused Architecture; an inner city health centre in Bethnel Green, London; a small community hospital in Wales; and a large district hospital at Newport, Isle of Wight. The study emphasizes that healthcare buildings should include *not merely the minimum requirements but the maximum possibilities*.

Water and wellbeing is another ongoing research area at Arts for Health. It includes the study of the effect on patients, staff and public, of two water sculptures installed in a new medium-secure hospital.

The arts in mental healthcare continues to occupy an important place in our research agenda. A number of studies have been completed, looking at the effectiveness of arts provision, both in psychiatric hospital care and in community care.

A very recent development in the United Kingdom has been the establishment this year of a new Institute of Medical Humanities, which is to be a federation of organisations dedicated to the promotion of arts and humanities in medical and nursing education.

Institute of Medical Humanities, London, England. A Federation of Organisations dedicated to the promotion of the arts and humanities in medical and nursing education.

This development arose from an initiative

of the Nuffield Trust, inspired by Sir Kenneth Calman, who at that time was the UK's Chief Medical Officer of Health. It concerns three broad themes; how to enhance the education of healthcare professionals through the study of the Humanities; the role of the arts and therapy; the arts used in community developments for well-being. This Institute of Medical Humanities represents new understanding by leading medics that the humanities have a significant role in the education of medical and healthcare students, and will, I feel sure, increase collaboration between the medical world and artists of all disciplines.

A new Centre for the Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine (CAHHM) has been established by Sir Kenneth Calman at the University of Durham where he is now the Vice Chancellor, Centre for the Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine (University of Durham, England), and a new National Network for Arts and Health (NNAH) has been established by the Kings Fund in London to link with projects and organisations in the field.

National Network for Arts and Health (London, England).

All these recent initiatives demonstrate the increased interest and activity, which is taking place in the United Kingdom.

The worldwide interest which is now being shown in the relationship between culture, health and the arts, highlights the need to consider which are the most appropriate forms of arts in all hospital and healthcare settings. Art should promote a sense of ease and not add to a sense of dis-ease. This must be the principle for this work.

In 1999 Arts for Health hosted a World Symposium – “Culture, Health and the Arts” – over 500 delegates from 28 countries debated some of these issues, and the presentations from the very eminent speakers have been compiled into the anthology – “A Powerful Force for Good”, published by the Manchester Metropolitan University. (4) Presentations from America, France, Sweden, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, India, Rumania, Slovenia,

Africa, Canada, Japan.

All illustrated a wealth of differing cultures being incorporated into arts in health projects as well as demonstrating that although there will always be national characteristics, in a general sense we are all human beings and as such respond in broadly similar ways to all manner of stimulus.

At the World Symposium, Professor Roger Ulrich gave a most significant presentation based on research carried out over a number of years, entitled “The Effects of Viewing Art on Medical outcomes”, and I commend this article to you in the book “A Powerful Force for Good.” In this presentation he identifies a medical definition of good art as “whether that art beneficially affects patients and are the negative effects acceptably low.” (5)

He further stated that; “some sounds, certain views of nature, and positive facial expressions have been very important or very advantageous to people for more than 2 million years of evolution.”(6).

He stated that at least 12 scientific studies published in journals throughout the world all reported the same findings; that just looking at certain types of everyday nature is quickly effective in three to five minutes, in producing a mild, eyes-open, relaxation response. Water has also been found to be extremely effective in certain configurations, as he mentioned this morning.

Creative artists need to take account of soundly based research findings such as these and consider his advice “above all avoid chaotic abstract art. Hospitals are not places in which to flex museum taste and muscles. All hospital art must be psychologically supportive.” (7).

It is clear that *arts in healthcare* is an international movement which is now being eagerly seized upon as a means to humanize the activity of healthcare, and demonstrate that culture and healthcare are complementary, reflecting local and national cultures and changing the perception and culture of healthcare. When the arts flourish in a healthcare setting, not only does the physical environment change, but the social

environment is tangibly different, and the attitude of those delivering the services changes as their workplace becomes enlivened. Communication and efficiency improves as a new arts programme provides a stimulating focus.

Arts for Health believes that all the arts have a complementary, catalytic and unifying role in health and care. These benefits are always considerably greater when patients, professional staff, hospital designers, visitors, carers and the local community are involved in the creation of artworks, performances and events.

Each international gathering like this is another step towards shared understanding of how art and design effectively complements health. I urge you to work with us to use art and design to change the culture and environment for health and care.

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