

Summary of PhD

Aesthetic Deprivation: the role of the arts for older people in hospital

A PhD conducted at Trinity College Dublin School of Medicine under the supervision of Prof Des O'Neill and Dr Claire Donnellan.

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While arts have been integral to all cultures, it is a relatively recent research phenomenon to explore and examine the association between arts and health and well-being (Johnson and Stanley, 2007). This research centres on the concept that aesthetics, the arts and culture are important for well-being and that hospitals may be aesthetically deprived environments. The research area of interest is the experience of older patients in acute hospital regarding aesthetics before, during and after hospital stay.

The overall research question is '*What is the role of aesthetics for patients in hospital?*' Specific aims of the research were to identify patient preferences and perceived benefits regarding arts interest, before, during and after hospital stay; to explore the role of arts in older patients' lives, in the context of what changing health does to one's aesthetic infrastructure; to explore the extent to which the hospital environment is aesthetically-deprived or enriched for each patient and to develop a Survey of Aesthetic and Cultural Health to begin to map patients engagement in aesthetics (SACH).

The research began with an extensive literature review, covering the fields of aesthetics and arts in healthcare settings (available on request, also peer reviewed publication on literature review available). This sets the context for the study, identifying gaps in the literature and developing the research question. Key gaps identified included the lack of attention given to the role of receptive arts in hospital (for example, listening to music, looking at art, watching film) as opposed to the concentration of literature on participative arts. Also, the need for mixed methodology studies and studies with thorough methodological rigour were needed.

Mixed methodology design (sequential-exploratory) was chosen for this research and the theoretical framework used is Maslow's Triangle of Needs.

The research has two parts: (1) a qualitative study of twenty older patients in acute hospital using in-depth interviews following Van Manen's phenomenological approach; (2) a quantitative study presenting the

process of developing and implementing SACH. The survey was conducted with 150 older patients in hospital and it explored the aesthetic interests of patients before, during and after hospital stay. The quantitative study was developed directly from findings from the qualitative study.

The results of the qualitative study were seven key themes: (1) the interests and passions of patients are important in hospital; (2) loss experienced in hospital, including loss of arts and leisure interests; (3) no expectation of being able to continue arts interests in hospital; (4) the aesthetics of hospital stay are important, for example noise pollution and colour; (5) positive experiences of the benefits of arts in hospital; (6) different needs for arts interventions depending on stay of hospital stay and recovery (for example rehabilitation and recovery time was more likely to be attuned to participating in arts activities whereas acute phases of illness required receptive arts interventions if any); (7) recommendations for improvements in hospital aesthetics (especially the need for quiet spaces in hospital). (See paper published on qualitative study available from author or on www.artshealthwellbeing.ie)

The quantitative study provided rich data on various aspects of aesthetics and hospital, notably that (1) film, music and dance were the most popular art forms in this sample (2) a large drop in attendance and participation in arts activities was noted after discharge from hospital, due mainly to physical difficulties, loss of confidence and loss of motivation (3) lack of choice and control over aesthetic activities and noise pollution in hospital and (4) the neglected attention given to receptive arts in hospital.

The mixed methodology analysis allows for findings from the exploratory qualitative study to directly influence the development of the confirmatory quantitative study. Results from the two arms of the research were compared and confirmed, with reference to international literature.

This research makes an original contribution by understanding the arts interests and needs of older people before, during and after hospital stay, providing information regarding how patients perceive the aesthetic environment of hospital and creating a survey that could be shared and used for this purpose. This is one of the first studies internationally to catalogue the aesthetic interests of patients in hospital, to assess patients' satisfaction with their aesthetic environment, to rigorously review which qualitative methodology is best used for arts and health studies and to set out a replicable process for in-depth patient interviews regarding the aesthetic environment of hospital.

The research contributes knowledge to the field – specifically, by providing baseline information on patients' aesthetic interests pre-hospital and their views regarding the aesthetic environment of hospital. Originality appears in the concept of aesthetic deprivation as an issue of relevance to health and well-being as well as highlighting the importance of receptive arts and noise pollution, aspects of aesthetic engagement rarely explored in the healthcare literature.

This research points to the possibility of aesthetic deprivation in hospital and begins to provide a template for assessing this for patients. It is hoped this survey, in particular, might be the beginnings of a more robust tool to assess aesthetic needs, interests and deficits as there are very few available to use at present in the health sector. There is a relatively limited amount of evidence based research undertaken as to the nature of, and potential benefit from, arts in health care and a relatively limited number of studies with rigorous methodology. This research has contributed peer-reviewed papers in this area of work and has contributed knowledge in this field of the role of aesthetics for older people in hospitals.

**Further information and all publications available from
author Hilary.moss@amnch.ie or on
www.artshealthwellbeing.ie**

Publications arising directly from this PhD research

Peer reviewed papers

MOSS, H., DONNELLAN, C. & O'NEILL, D. Hospitalisation and aesthetic health in older adults. *In press Journal of the American Medical Directors Association* 2014.

MOSS, H & O'NEILL, D 2014. Moss H, O'Neill D. Aesthetic deprivation in clinical settings. *Lancet* 2014;383: 1032-3.

MOSS, H. & O'NEILL, D. 2014. The aesthetic and cultural interests of patients attending an acute hospital – a phenomenological study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 70, 121 - 129.

MOSS, H., DONNELLAN, C. & O'NEILL, D. 2012. A review of qualitative methodologies used to explore patient perceptions of arts and healthcare. *J Med Ethics; Medical Humanities* 38, 106 - 109.

MOSS, H. & O'NEILL, D. 2012. Medical Humanities Serious Academic Pursuit or Doorway to Dilettantism? *Irish Medical Journal*, 105, 261 - 2.

MOSS, H. 2012. Media Review: The King's Speech. *Arts and Health: International Journal for Research, Policy & Practice*, 4 183-185.

O'CONNELL, C., CASSIDY, A., O'NEILL, D. & MOSS, H. 2013. The Aesthetic and Cultural Pursuits of Patients with Stroke. *Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Diseases*, 22, e404-e418.