The National Centre for Arts and Health
Tallaght Hospital, Dublin

Report on Dialysis Unit Art Programme
2013 – 14

All artworks featured in this report were completed by patients DURING THEIR RENAL DIALYSIS SESSIONS.
INTRODUCTION

The National Centre for Arts and Health exists to improve patient care and to promote the benefits of the arts in health. Situated in the hospital, the centre aims to improve the hospital experience for patients, to explore the therapeutic potential of the arts, to build positive links with the local community and to make the arts accessible to patients who cannot access traditional arts venues. The current arts programme includes exhibitions, live performances, creative writing classes, arts therapies, design projects and participatory art sessions on wards and in waiting rooms. The art programme is free for everyone attending the hospital and all art programmes are tailored to the needs of individual patients and clinical departments.

The hospital arts programme features a number of national innovations and strives to promote best practice in arts and health, through professional development, evaluation and research. The centre also offers consultation and advice to services establishing arts and health programmes and regularly gives presentations on its work, within both medical and arts settings.

Over the last decade, the Arts Programme in the hospital has evolved to provide not only a substantial arts and health programme, but also national leadership in academic and practical development of this important aspect of health.

The programme has engaged in collaboration with major cultural institutions in the State, including the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the National Gallery of Ireland, RUA RED Arts Centre and the National Concert Hall. This annual report features a number of highlights from 2012 and plans for 2013.
THE ART PROGRAMME FOR PATIENTS IN THE RENAL DIALYSIS UNIT

The Art Programme for Patients in the Renal Dialysis Unit is a flagship programme of the hospital and an international leader. Previous work, supported by Punchestown Kidney Research Fund include a manual of best practice for artists and health services beginning to implement art for patients on renal dialysis, exhibitions of work by artists in the unit (patients have sold their work), calendars and packs of cards by people in the renal dialysis unit.

Every penny donated by the PKRF goes on art materials for patients and to pay the artist facilitator Lucia Barnes.

ART AND THE RENAL DIALYSIS UNIT

In 2013 - 14 we continued to employ experienced artist and nurse, Ms Lucia Barnes, to co-ordinate the art sessions on the renal dialysis unit. We also recruited four new artists who generously volunteer their time to provide art sessions at the bedside for dialysis patient. We have expanded to hold craft sessions and extended the hours we operate to allow for people on different dialysis ‘shifts’ to avail of the service, including evening sessions.

Led by Lucia Barnes, these artists offer bedside art sessions to relieve the long hours spent in hospital in a creative and productive way, thus improving their quality of life. In 2013 – 4 we carried out a large evaluation of all our bedside art sessions across the whole hospital. (Report included) Feedback was very positive about the art service, the only improvement noted was that some people would prefer a quiet art room in the hospital so that they could create art with a bit more privacy. We are working now towards that goal, whilst recognising that for dialysis patients in particular the bedside work is essential to pass the time while on dialysis.

STATEMENT FROM ARTIST, MS LUCIA BARNES:

For many years now it has been a real pleasure for me to be involved in the art programme in the dialysis unit at Tallaght Hospital, pursuing creativity with such an inspiring group of patients and dedicated hard working staff. We co-ordinate the art sessions to access as many patients as possible, and thanks to the generous funding from Punchestown Kidney Research Fund, we are able to provide six sessions weekly. We have been fortunate to be able to recruit extremely committed volunteer artists, who receive orienteering and training regularly in order to work in such a specialized environment. Over the years the art sessions have given patients the opportunity to learn new techniques in drawing, painting, mosaics and glass art, which help to pass some of the long hours that they are attached to their machines, and provide a welcome distraction from their clinical worries.

This year we have expanded greatly on the craft element of the art programme. This has been a wonderful success among both the young and elderly patients. We began with a variety of seasonal themes- Christmas tree decorations and Easter chicks. Patients then wanted to learn to knit and crochet different items for themselves and gifts for their family and friends. Everything from baby booties, shoes and blankets to hats, scarves and throws/rugs for their own beds were attempted and completed. Patients and their families were enthusiastic about sourcing the best value and variety for the wool and other materials. Although the participants in the knitting and crochet aspects of the sessions were predominantly female, the male patients were interested in the dynamics that this element created. It has also been very encouraging to witness the support and enthusiasm in the art sessions on an ongoing basis from the dialysis staff, who have now also rekindled their own interests in knitting and crochet.
Many of the patients who have not been interested in the crafts, continued to immerse themselves in the art sessions, learning about artists and developing their drawing and painting skills.
The **e-reader project in conjunction with Tallaght Library** has also continued to provide enjoyment and interest to patients during their dialysis sessions.

During the art sessions, I am continuing to collect material from patients, which, I hope will eventually be compiled into an illustrated anthology. This material includes: a variety of recipes, folklore and stories, technical information regarding the making of rocking horses and gates, propagating seeds, household tips, practical husbandry, songs and poems.

### CREATIVE PLANS FOR THE DIALYSIS UNIT- 2014-2015

During 2014-2015 we hope to:

- Continue to provide art sessions, teaching drawing, painting and craftwork, so that they will access as many patients as possible, giving a complimentary aspect in their overall holistic care.
- Organize an exhibition of patient’s work towards the end of 2015, since exhibitions can create a goal and give patients a sense of pride and achievement in their work.
- Continue to collate material for an illustrated anthology of reflections, anecdotes, stories, tips, recipes as well as knitting and crochet patterns that are part of the everyday life of the dialysis patient.
- Develop a collaborative knitted project among dialysis patients, staff and artists. We plan to make a large multi coloured blanket or throw from a variety of knitted squares collected in the unit and crocheted together. This will then be raffled to help raise some funds for other art projects in the dialysis unit.
- Continue to organise the art sessions so that they will access as many patients as possible, providing a complimentary aspect in their overall holistic care.
- Introduce a series of national professional development training courses for artists working in health care settings, as well as national information days for health service staff. Our aim is to train artists and improve standards of service for all patients.
receiving art while on renal dialysis as well as informing and educating health service staff on the positive aspects of this service.

The access to creativity and developing new interests and skills, instils a sense of pride and achievement in the patient, which can only be beneficial in their overall holistic care. With regard to myself and my fellow artists, involved in the art sessions in the dialysis unit, it has been a very rewarding experience, working with the patients, and seeing their progress, and their delight with the new skills learnt.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE ARTS PROGRAMME AT TALLAGHT HOSPITAL

There are a number of other activities at Tallaght Hospital that dialysis patients can access. These include:

- Music performance programme. Every week we host music events in the atrium of the hospital that are free for patients and visitors to attend. These include book festival events and performances range from classical to traditional, African to Nepalese music!
- E-reading scheme in conjunction with South Dublin libraries. Thanks to a partnership with Tallaght library we now offer e-readers for patients in the dialysis unit for use while in hospital. These offer an introduction to this technology to those who are not familiar to this technology as well as offering easier ways to use books and libraries for those with limited mobility and other reading issues.
- The research programme at the National Centre for Arts and Health continues to grow, with a recent publication in The Lancet medical journal highlighting the deprivation experienced by hospital patients in terms of access to quality music, art, stimulation and colour (paper attached). We continue to present the work at the dialysis unit in Tallaght at every opportunity.

FUNDING

The National Centre for Arts and Health is dependent on grants and fundraising to run its programmes, there is no core funding or budget for arts in the hospital. The Centre relies on, and is very grateful for, funding from the Punchestown Kidney Research Fund and a number of other key sponsors. We wish to thank PKRF for its support for this programme.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

On any aspect of the Renal Dialysis Art Programme please contact Hilary Moss, Director of Arts and Health Tel: 01 414 2076.