



The Art of Inspiring Creativity in a Psychosis Service

Dr Hanna Booth MBChB

Specialty Doctor

PIER team Leicester

Leicestershire Partnership and NHS Foundation Trust

The National Institute for Clinical Care and Excellence, or NICE, which guides UK health care, gives art therapy as one of the recommended treatments for patients with psychosis and schizophrenia. In our trust we have an Art Café, which outside of lockdown runs at our local mental health unit.

For some people, the urge to paint or draw continues in spite of their mental health difficulties. We have received as a team some beautiful gifts of artwork presented to members of staff or to use to raise funds. (see below image 1)

However, this is not the story for everyone. One of the challenges of working with patients with a first episode of psychosis is this. How can you inspire people who either because of trauma, anxiety or negative symptoms have lost their creative mojo? How can you encourage people

who may have come to define themselves as a patient and forgotten that they are many other things? And when you find such people on your caseload, how can you transcend the barriers presented by transportation challenges, anxiety about leaving home or meeting with others to connect with people outside of a purely clinical setting to help kick-start a love of all things creative?

Some time back, I looked after a lady who was an accomplished artist, but due to her response to some difficult circumstances did very little past the basics of survival. With her especially in mind, my occupational therapist colleague and I cooked up a plan. We decided to set up a pilot group where we would provide some art materials and give people time and space to come and be creative together. Nobody would have to talk about their symptoms but just come and be artists of whatever level, together. We discovered that the

Image 1



main challenge was getting people to our health centre. When they came, they seemed to really enjoy it, but without the aid of care co-ordinators bringing them and encouraging attendance, they would forget or not manage to come.

We decided after the pilot that a different approach was needed. Social anxiety, poor motivation secondary to depression, or worries about transport seemed to have stopped people coming consistently. We felt that we could start a hub, where people could post in their art and have an option to meet up in a group if they liked, perhaps just every month instead of two-weekly as we originally planned, but that this attendance would be optional. This way, people who needed a gentle bit of inspiration could continue at home if needed. Our plans were thwarted by the onset of the UK COVID-19 lockdown but we decided that at least people could still post their work to us and one day, when we are back to having a full waiting area, their work could be displayed there for others to enjoy.

In the mean-time another colleague had a brainwave. Why don't we run a remote art group instead? Our art hub took on a new form. It is now called 'Creative Connections' and is run successfully on a fortnightly basis over Microsoft teams. The attendees have built some lovely connections with each-other and have a new topic to inspire them each time that they meet.

As Picasso said, 'Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life'. Some of our examples of soul washing activities are shown in the pictures above.



"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." - Pablo Picasso

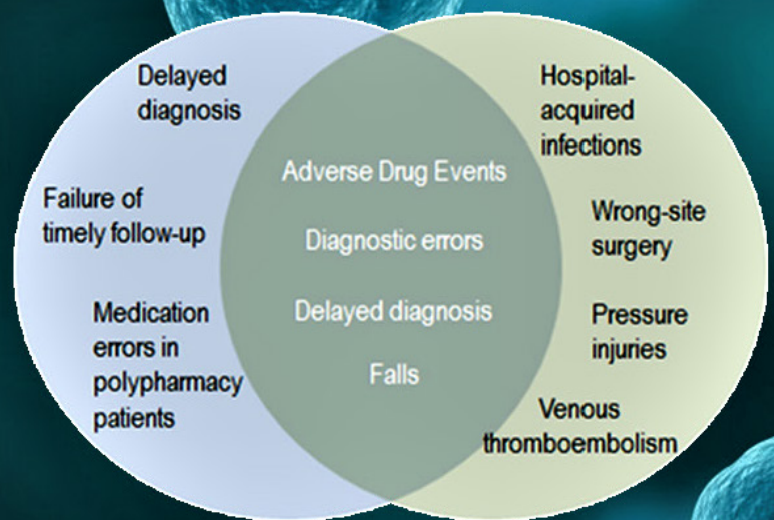
Dr Hanna Booth, MBChB Leicester Medical School, is a Speciality Doctor in an Early Intervention in Psychosis service, the PIER Team, in Leicester UK. She has a passion for arts and creativity which she expresses through painting and writing outside of working hours. In her role as a doctor she helps to run an online art group with PIER.

Improve patient safety by eliminating adverse events in health care settings

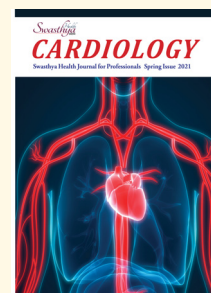
It is estimated that every year more than 300,000 patients acquire a healthcare associated infection (HCAI, HAI or nosocomial infection) as a result of care with in the NHS.

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