



Use of Art in Cancer Care

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Institution:

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Poster

Objective:

Patients being treated for sarcoma at UCLH are being offered creative sessions as a novel form of support.

Brief description:

An artist has joined the London Sarcoma Service visiting UCLH once a week to encourage patients and staff to express themselves using art. Since September 2008, over 150 patients and staff have taken part in practical sessions with their own choice of subject matter. Adults have been approached wherever possible as there are fewer activities available for them in the wards than for teenagers and children. Sessions can last from half an hour to several hours and have been used by patients to confront their cancer journey or to escape and reconnect with themselves. With consent, patients have added copies of their work to an open folder to share their experiences and contribute to the sense of community. To generate interest and encourage patients in the wards, creative sessions have also been organised for patients to work with their nurses and doctors to make seasonal decorations to brighten the wards and bring a sense of community.

Conclusions:

The opportunity for creating art has been well received by patients and staff. Sessions provide distraction from their illness and a sense of achievement during treatment. In some cases patients have chosen to express their cancer stories and find powerful ways to visualise their hopes. In other cases patients have used art to relax, and build and confirm their identity. Staff have commented on seasonal creative sessions with their patients as, "*wonderful to do something together and forget where we are for a moment*", and, "*you only have to listen to the laughter and watch the smiles to realise the benefits*".

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