

Section 1: Research Digest

Health

The Exeter Evaluation

Evaluation Research Project of the Exeter Health Care Arts for the Royal Devon & Exeter Healthcare Trust [UK]

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Arts for Health

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Objectives

The purpose of the report was to evaluate the work of Exeter Health Care Arts [EHCA] at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital during the period from its inception, in 1992, to 1998.

Methodology

The methods comprised familiarisation with EHCA, a detailed inventory of all artwork introduced to the hospital, an opinion survey of users' responses and an opinion survey of front-line clinical staff.

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Summary

The early sections of the report cover the commission itself, the history and development of EHCA activities, an inventory of work and the opinion surveys. Section 6 provides details of Arts for Health's assessments of EHCA's activities. These are summarised under four headings: [i] The Effects of the Arts on Users of the Hospital; [ii] The Range and Distribution of Art Works; [iii] Support, Awareness, Finance and Economic Aspects; [iv] Health Professionals' Views of Effects on Health Care.

The authors found that the displays of visual art are appreciated by users, with participatory work especially valued. A large majority of clinical staff consider arts projects have a positive effect on patient and staff morale. Public areas of the hospital had more artwork than departmental areas and there were few performances during the evaluation period. Amongst visual artworks, local content was highly appreciated. The majority of users approved of money being raised for arts in health care and, in the authors' view, the Trust has secured good value for money. Over a third of front-line clinical staff believe the arts have positive effects on the healing process. A third believed the arts could be further integrated into their work.

The report's conclusions cover [i] Awareness and Communication - there should be an active programme to inform staff about EHCA work; [ii] Displaying Visual Arts - how and where art works are displayed should be given more consideration; [iii] Staff Participation - staff should be more involved and offered training and professional development opportunities; [iv] Resources - there is a need for adequate revenue funding; and [v] The Value of the Arts in Health Care - further research is needed to deepen understanding of how the arts assist health care.

Availability

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