

Poster Session

Creative Writing, Literature and Medicine and the Cambridge Graduate Course in Medicine at the West Suffolk Hospital, Bury St Edmunds

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A course in creative writing was designed as a possible tool in medical education. Twelve volunteers (6 Doctors and 6 non-medical staff) participated in seven workshops held weekly. Four stated aims were identified: to help put thoughts onto paper, to help interpretation of narrative, to help express emotions related to illness and death, and to encourage creativity. The course was evaluated using participant observational analysis and two questionnaires. This paper discusses the outcomes in relation to these aims, but also identifies other issues raised by the development.

Only 6/12 participants produced a final piece of written work, with lack of self-discipline being cited as the chief reason. There was a strong tendency for self-reflection in the group, which needed appropriate support. How creativity can be encouraged remains unclear. The value of multidisciplinary learning in this context was demonstrated.

The validity of using creative writing for medical education remains difficult to measure, but the participants agreed unanimously that the course would be a valuable way of encouraging medical students in its stated aims.