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Objectives

Does the introduction of Storytelling and Art based practice within healthcare curriculum promote communication, empathy, teamwork, and help form professional identity?

Introduction

The introduction of storytelling and art-based education into healthcare curricula positively influences and enhances fundamental skills for healthcare professionals (Howley et al., 2020) (Olson & Trappey, 2024). Skills such as communication, observation, empathy, teamwork and leadership (Slavin, 2023). It promotes flexible thinking which is required to manage uncertainty.

Methods

An inter-professional storytelling and art-based education conference was designed and delivered for Year 1 Medical and year 2 Physician Associate students at the North Wales Medical School. The day featured a diverse programme of presentations and creative engagements:

1. Arts Development Coordinator Arts, exploring intersection of the arts and community wellbeing
2. Monologue Ay – The stories of NHS Staff
3. Dancing Collective
4. Lived Experience talks
5. 'What matters most' arts exhibition
6. Online workshop on arts- based healthcare delivered by Dr Corinne Zimmermann and Dr Lisa Wong, introduction into Visual thinking Strategies (VTS)

Art Institute of Chicago: <https://www.artic.edu/collection>



Open the QR code on the left - <https://www.artic.edu/collection>
Explore **just the first 3 pages** of the collection
Find a work of art that resonates with your prompt.
Think about the connections.

Intended Learning Outcomes

- Promote flexible and metacognitive practice
- Development of meaningful reflective practice
- Development of professional identity



Figure1: Views from Reichel, main conference room. Dr Corine Zimmermann discussing visual thinking strategy (VTS) techniques with medical and physician associate students, including a mix of faculty in the art based medical education workshop. Reichel, Bangor University, 17th of May 2025.



Figure2: Views from Reichel, main conference room. Presentation from the Dancing collective, community and the arts. Reichel, Bangor University, 17th of May 2025.



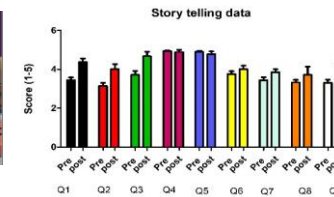
Figure3: Views from Reichel, main conference room. Students, faculty and external contributors participating in the dance collective. Reichel, Bangor University, 17th of May 2025.



Figure 4: Views from Reichel, main conference room. Lived experience participants with Dr Jan Roberts. Reichel, Bangor University, 17th of May 2025.

Results

- **Significant improvement:** Confidence in communicating with patients ($p = 0.0029$)
- **Non-significant trends:** Categories 2, 3, 7–9 (e.g., teamwork, critical thinking)
- **No change:** Categories 4, 5 (high baseline), Category 6 (empathy, $p = 0.4514$)
- **Qualitative themes:**
 - Greater appreciation of non-verbal cues
 - Increased collaboration and engagement
 - Desire for more creative and IPE sessions



How confident do you feel in your ability to communicate with patients? (1=not confident, 5=very confident)	1
How confident are you with understanding non-verbal cues from other healthcare professionals? (1=not confident, 5=very confident)	2
How confident do you feel with understanding the importance of non-verbal communication skills in a healthcare setting? (1=not confident, 5=very confident)	3
How important is empathy to you? (1=not important, 5=very important)	4
On a scale of 1-5 how important is empathy in improving patient outcomes? (1=not very important, 5=very important)	8
How confident are you that you can demonstrate empathy in a range of stressful or emotionally charged situations? (1=not confident, 5=very confident)	6
How well do you feel you work with colleagues from other healthcare disciplines? (1=not well, 5=very well)	7
How strongly do you feel your sense of professional identity is at the stage of your education? (1=not strong, 5=very strong)	8
How much do you think creative activities (like art or poetry or arts) contribute to the development of a healthcare professional identity? (1=not at all, 5=very much)	9

Discussion

This initiative underscores the value of storytelling and arts-based education in developing key competencies for healthcare practice. While communication confidence showed measurable gains, the results also prompt further exploration into how empathy is best taught. For educators seeking to prepare reflective, adaptive, and human centered practitioners, creative pedagogies offer a compelling, evidence-informed approach

Take home message

- Storytelling enhanced communication and self-reflection.
- Empathy may require different pedagogical strategies or more longitudinal input.
- Arts-based education is a valuable complement to traditional methods

Bibliography

- Howley, L., Gaufberg, E., & King, B. (2020). *The Fundamental Role of the Arts and Humanities in Medical Education*.
- Olson, M. E., & Trappey, B. E. (2024). Making space for stories: promoting physician and medical student well-being through successful medical education storytelling events. In *BMC medical education* (Vol. 24, Issue 1, p. 1172). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-024-06130-6>
- Slavin, R. W. R. Z. C. (2023). *Activating The Art Museum Designing Experiences for the Health Professions*. Rowmann & Littlefield