

Art Care at SMRH

I'm Rachel Power, and I was the Artist in Residence at St. Martha's Regional Hospital from February 6, 2017 – December 31, 2019.

For the month of December in 2016, I was the replacement for the previous Artist in Residence at SMRH, where I worked 10 hours a week directly with patients and 10 hours a week prepping and reflecting. From February 6, 2017, I was the artist in residence hired for 20 hours a week. Between January 12, 2019 – March 22, 2019, I had permission to work fewer hours as I was back in school as a student, so I worked between 14– 24 hours every two weeks rather than the regular 40 hours. As of March 23, 2019, I worked the regular 40 hours every two weeks until December 31, 2019.

Outcomes

As the visual artist in residence at St. Marth's Regional Hospital, I work directly with patients and their families in making, viewing and reflecting on art in both one-to-one and small group settings. My intention is to offer art activities to both individual patients and small groups exploring countless ways in which visual arts and storytelling can enhance our health - of the body, mind and spirit. The art in healthcare experience has a positive impact on patients by aiding in their physical, mental, and emotional recovery, including relieving anxiety and decreasing the perception of pain. Art can serve as healing tool, reducing stress and loneliness and providing opportunities for self-expression.

General description of program elements/activities/interventions

I spent most of my time with patients, especially in the Oncology, and Geriatric, Ambulatory and Rehabilitation and Mental Health. On occasion, I would work with patients one-to-one in the Progressive Care Unit or in the Maternity Unit. The patients I worked with in the Maternity Unit were not expectant nor new mothers, rather patients who were given beds in this unit.

In 2019, I also worked with many loved ones of patients. Normally, loved ones would join in with the patient who is participating, but there are also times when a loved one was looking for a break, a distraction or a 'caring for the caretaker' moment.

Because I my position was part-time and I had other jobs and commitments, I missed a couple of opportunities in 2019 to work in the Palliative Care Unit. There were two requests for me to work with two different patients in this unit. Unfortunately, both of these requests came late in the day when I was leaving for other jobs and was not returning to the hospital for two to three days. By the time I returned, one patient had passed and the other was no longer up for or capable of having art as a part of their day. I truly regret not making it to these patients in time.

The Art Care at SMRH helps to foster caring and authentic relationships with patients and their loved ones by taking the time to talk to them directly and by making art together. I also made time to speak formally and informally with staff in order to get important details on physical abilities and limitations of patients. Staff would also let me know if someone was depressed or lonely, and we would try to rally these patients to join in, even as a spectator. This communication was extremely helpful in my practice. By getting to know patients, I was better able to research and create art projects that focused on their interests and abilities.

Over the year, many people, including family members, friends and staff, commented to me that they had witnessed the enormous value and transformative power of visual arts in building and maintaining holistic health of both the patients and their loved ones. I always felt that I had great support from the staff, Hospital Auxiliary, Sisters of St. Martha and the SMRH Mission Committee. Another group that helped create a warm and creative atmosphere were the volunteers. In 2019, I had

Art activities include: acrylic paint on canvas, watercolours, seasonal crafts, origami, wall displays, colouring pages, drawing, wire sculpture, miniature furniture building, using art apps on the iPad, poetry, gardening and more.

Numbers

I have had a total of 13 volunteers in 3 years. I normally had two volunteers assisting with the program in the solarium on alternate days. In 2019, I had 4 volunteers at various times throughout the year.

There have been a total of ten people attending the art in oncology. There can be anywhere from one attendee and up to seven at a time on any given Wednesday.

Since February 6, 2017 and between GARU, Mental Health and PCU and Maternity, I worked with approximately 470 patients and loved ones. Because some patients and loved ones were repeat participants over the span of the three years, it is difficult to pinpoint exact numbers.

Dedication to the Sisters of St. Martha

In 2019, I spearheaded a project for the Sisters of St. Martha in which staff and volunteers at SMRH could contribute. An email was sent out by hospital administration to everyone in the on site with the intent, vision, location and instructions for this dedication. Over the span of two months, the backdrop was completed by staff and volunteers, then I finished the final piece of the steeple. The actual steeple, that used to be on the chapel at the now demolished chapel at Bethany, now sits in front of the sisters' new residence. I thought it would be a fitting homage along with the backdrop of 'stained' glass that was such a feature of their original chapel.

This past January, 2020, I gave a farewell presentation to the SMRH Auxiliary where I presented this piece called, "Light & Strength". Below is an image of the piece and the list of contributors.



Contributed by:

Rachel Power – Artist in Residence
Lee Boyle – Physiotherapist
Lena MacDonald – Physio Aide
Melanie Belong – Student Volunteer
Megan Crawford – Physio Assistant
Charlene Warren – Housekeeping
Hannah Perry – Housekeeping
Carol Greencorn – Housekeeping
Nathalie MacDonald - Cardio-Respiratory
Veronica MacEachern– Cardio Respiratory
Darlene Murrant – Physiotherapist
Cathy Berkvens – Staff Education
Marilyn Malis – CVHNS
Bertha MacDonald – Housekeeping
Margaret Boudreau – Administration
Sam Bardwell – St. FX Volunteer
Maggie O’Connor - St. FX Volunteer
Natalie Tate – System Performance
Andrea Donovan – Mental Health & Addictions
Danielle Murphy – Administration
Debbie Ross – PECHB Support