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ST.CHRISTOPHERS GROUP PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

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10.1136/bmjspcare-2014-000654.157

Background This paper explores and assesses a dynamic annual arts partnership organised by the hospice and the Royal Academy over the past three years.

The Royal Academy is an independent institution led by eminent artists and architects that promotes the creation and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions of international importance, education and debate.

The St. Christopher's Group promotes and provides skilled, compassionate, high quality palliative care and has a vision of the place and therapeutic purpose of the arts both in end of life care and as part of health promotion.

Patients visit a major art exhibition and work with artists to create their own art as part of a joint project.

Aims To give patients special access to major Academy exhibitions and to provide workshops to create their own art, individually and collaboratively; exhibiting work at the Royal Academy and the hospice; promoting healthier attitudes and organising public discussion of issues raised by project and exhibition; to explore the place of the arts and a major national arts institution within the end of life journey of hospice patients and their families.

Results Patients were motivated to complete the artwork and visit the Academy. Working in the atmosphere of a major exhibition and seeing their art exhibited was very affirming. They developed new respect for their work, felt enriched, created positive memories. A major end of project event at the Academy provides a forum for wider debate with eminent artists, dying patients and the general public. For patients: increased confidence, motivation, self-discovery, achievement, affirmation, celebration.

Conclusions It's difficult to develop a project over time with patients who are managing complex medical issues and fluctuating levels of illness. Travel and mobility concerns challenge careful planning. Such projects depend on multi-professional collaboration. Many art institutions hold similar visions of inclusivity, education, debate. Such projects are eminently transferable.