

Renal Arts Group - Quarterly Report July 2019

Appointment of Administrator

The Renal Arts Group welcomed the appointment of their new administrator in April 2019. Anna Wilson joined the group on a part time basis, a post which has been made possible with funding from Kidney Care UK. Anna's duties will include the co-ordination of the groups meetings and activities, and she will assist with research, funding applications and development of new projects.



Meetings & members

In response to requests by group members, Renal Arts Group meetings will increase in frequency from quarterly to monthly, to ensure the continued momentum of projects.



We welcomed 2 new members to the group. Shaun Greene is a 3 time kidney transplant recipient and a keen photographer, and works with a community outreach project based in Craigavon. Emmanuel Flanagan was a participant in Claire Carswell's PhD research project and is currently undergoing hemodialysis at the Antrim Area Hospital. Emmanuel is an accomplished poet and is currently in the process of publishing a book of his own poetry.

In The Media

Members of the group were featured in an article in the Belfast Telegraph in April discussing the benefits of the arts for patients with kidney disease. Christopher Johnston and William Johnston discussed how becoming involved with the arts helped them cope with living with a chronic disease, and Dr Helen Noble and Claire Carswell outlined their pioneering research and how the Renal Arts Group has provided opportunities for the development of multi-disciplinary education and research. The article can be found here:

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/health/northern-ireland-patients-on-how-getting-to-art-of-the-matter-helped-them-cope-with-dialysis-37993451.html>

The Renal Arts Group now has active Facebook and Twitter pages. These social media channels will be used to promote our activities and research, and engage with new audiences online.



Events

The Belfast Health and Social Care Belfast City Hospital Arts Care 7th Annual Spring Arts Festival took place from Monday 13th to Friday 17th May, organised by group member Mr Ian Walsh who has been recently appointed to the Board of Directors for Arts Care. Many members of the Renal Arts Group contributed to the festival. Dr Helen Noble and William Johnston performed poetry accompanied by Ian on guitar, Anna Wilson led an origami workshop and Claire Carswell performed a dramatic monologue during the Gala Concert held in the Crescent Arts Centre. Representatives from Kidney Care UK and Northern Ireland Kidney Patient Association were present at these events and engaged with many patients, visitors and staff at the hospital.



The group has made a successful application to the Economic and Social Research Council for funding to stage an event called 'The Art of Health and Wellbeing' for the Festival of Social

Science which runs from Saturday 2nd to Saturday 9th November 2019. The event will be a showcase highlighting the research and creative talents of the group, featuring talks,

photography, art, poetry and music, along with a panel discussing the benefits of the arts in health.

Research

Claire Carswell's PhD project, which has been conceptualised and supported by the Renal Arts Group and has received funding from both Kidney Care UK and Northern Ireland Kidney Patient Association, is ongoing. The project is centred on developing an arts-based intervention for patients receiving haemodialysis with the hope of a future randomised controlled trial to assess impact. Data collection has finished and the pilot trial was successful. Preliminary findings suggest that both patients and healthcare staff find multiple benefits from the intervention. As a result of this positive response Claire is currently working with the haemodialysis unit, the Northern Trust and Arts Care NI to establish a more sustainable arts programme in the unit, as well as identifying funding opportunities for a larger, definitive trial that will hopefully improve access to the arts in haemodialysis units.

Claire presented findings from her PhD study of arts based interventions at a renal unit at the UK Kidney Week 2019 Conference in Brighton. William Johnston and Christopher Johnston were invited to display poetry and photography at the conference and received a very positive response to their work.



Ongoing Projects

The group is keen to develop a play written by William Johnston called 'The Starman' into a performance or short film and is exploring avenues for funding this multi-disciplinary and collaborative project.

William is also working with Anna Wilson on the development of a photographic timeline exploring the journey of living with chronic kidney disease, which will complement 'The Starman' production and we hope will serve as an educational resource for patients and carers.

