

Renal Arts Group Quarterly Report October - December 2019

Meetings & Members

The Renal Arts Group continues to meet on a monthly basis at the Medical Biology Centre at Queen's University Belfast, and plans to hold evening meetings twice a year in 2020 to allow members who are working full time to attend.

In November Dr Helen Noble successfully applied to the Northern Ireland Kidney Research Fund for £35,106 to support Anna Wilson's role as Administrator for a further 2 years from April 2020. We are delighted to receive this funding which will allow Anna to remain in post and continue the work of the group, and build upon the seed funding provided by Kidney Care UK.



Events



RAG recently held a successful event at the Sunflower public house, Belfast 'The Art of Health and Wellbeing' as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science 2019. The event aimed to explore the intersection of creativity, arts and health and showcased a variety of performances from patients and healthcare professionals, as well as an exhibition of art created by patients during haemodialysis. This artwork was generated via Claire Carswell's PhD research study, supervised by

Dr Helen Noble, Professor Joanne Reid and Mr Ian Walsh, which is exploring the feasibility of implementing arts-based interventions in haemodialysis units.

The event was promoted on social media networks and invitations were sent to staff and patients across the Health and Social Care Trusts. Members of RAG were invited on to NVTV, a local media channel, to discuss the event and the research being carried out by the group which you can watch here:

<http://www.nvtv.co.uk/shows/the-round-up-wednesday-30th-october-2019/?fbclid=IwAR1exX6uw31DbTHTS6B2jszMOIRCCDyQE8l1uzc-icBroVhYwHQAqw7l31M>

Claire Carswell also wrote a blog post for news and opinion portal Slugger O'Toole, who were the promotional partner for the ESRC Festival. You can read Claire's post on the benefits of creativity for health and wellbeing here:

<https://sluggerotoole.com/2019/10/10/getting-creative-with-health/>



The event was hosted by Dr Helen Noble, Senior Lecturer, and Professor Peter Maxwell, Consultant Nephrologist, who welcomed kidney transplant patients William Johnston and Shaun Greene to discuss the impact of the arts on their health and wellbeing during their renal healthcare journey. Claire Carswell presented work from her study, and also performed a monologue from a play focussing on patient mental health. Guest speaker Deborah Duval, Managing Editor of Kidney Matters, Kidney Care UK explained how the charity supports renal arts in Northern Ireland and the event concluded with a lively blues set from RAGBONE, featuring Mr Ian Walsh, Consultant Surgeon and Senior Lecturer, Alistair MacKenzie, Social Worker at South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and Lyn McMullan, Audiovisual Producer. A truly multi-professional line-up!

The event was shared widely on social media by members of the renal and arts communities, and we have received fantastic feedback from audience members and participants. We hope to take part in the Festival again in 2020.

Dr Helen Noble and Lesley Bratty from the Northern Ireland Kidney Patient Association led a Mindfulness and Yoga workshop to reduce stress and improve wellbeing at a Belfast yoga studio on Saturday 23rd November. The workshop was attended by renal patients, carers and practitioners who learnt about mindfulness practice and took part in breathing exercises, yoga and meditation. We received fantastic feedback from participants about the workshop as well as requests to run this event again in future.





On Wednesday 11th December, members of the group and the wider renal community attended the Ulster Museum for a 'Mindfulness at the Museum' workshop. The group received a guided gallery tour by Outreach Officer Sharon McKibben, and then took part in an art activity creating collaged mirrors. All the participants really enjoyed the workshop and expressed a strong interest in taking part in future museum events. We also discussed the potential of taking museum outreach into renal units for haemodialysis patients.

Projects in Development

The Renal Arts Group are delighted to have been awarded £5,000 funding from Arts Council of Northern Ireland to develop William Johnston's script for 'The Starman, The Superhero and The Wizards', working with award-winning playwright and producer Shannon Yee. Shannon will provide bespoke mentoring to William to develop the script, offer read-through sessions for group members to provide feedback, which will culminate in a performance of the play in a theatre space with professional actors. The performance will become part of a larger body of patient-led work that will be taken to international conference to highlight the benefits of the arts for patients with kidney disease.



As part of this project we will be offering a series of scriptwriting workshops, facilitated by Shannon, to all our group members, their families, carers and the wider renal community. The workshops will offer the opportunity to develop script-writing and creative writing skills, and also open up the conversation around organ donation, living with chronic illness, life on dialysis, life post-transplant, and how creative writing and engaging with the arts can be beneficial to the individual's journey.

The project aims to raise awareness and educate audiences of the realities of living with chronic disease and the importance of organ donation, and to encourage patients with chronic illness, including kidney disease, to explore the arts as a beneficial component of their rehabilitation by engaging with the performance and providing feedback on their experience.



RAG has been approached by NVTV with a view to making a documentary about the groups work in 2020. NVTV have made several documentaries about health related issues in the past, and they are interested in

investigating the links between art and health and the work of RAG. We will be meeting with producers from the channel in the New Year to discuss the development of this project.

Research

Claire Carswell and Alistair MacKenzie presented their work at the presenting at NI Regional Audit and Quality Improvement Meeting and NI Nephrology Forum at Malone House on Thursday 14th November.

Claire has submitted an application for a session at UK Kidney Week 2020, entitled 'Getting creative with health: Using the arts to promote health and wellbeing amongst patients with kidney disease'. Claire and William Johnston will present the session, chaired by Deborah Duval, which will blend art and science by providing the attendees with a personal performance of either poetry or an excerpt from a play based on a person's lived experience of kidney disease, a summary of the ongoing research in this area, and an exhibition of artwork completed by patients during haemodialysis sessions.



Dr Helen Noble, in collaboration with Claire Carswell and Anna Wilson, have been awarded £9,932 by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Fund along with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to draw up guidelines for future implementation of volunteer-led arts interventions in renal units. This work will be developed with Claire Carswell and Anna Wilson during 2020, via a series of meetings and workshops with NHSCT staff, patients and artists. The guidance will be disseminated across Northern Ireland and through national arts and health organisations.

Acknowledgements

The continued support from Kidney Care UK in funding our Administrator role has been integral to the ongoing development of the group. We are also grateful to NIKPA for their continued support and assistance.