New ways of delivering our business: for health practitioners and for artists

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The intersection between arts and health is playing an important part in an environment of health promotion and prevention. As the discussion grows and the benefits of this area of practice are documented, focus is now being shifted to how practitioners from both the health and arts sides of the conversation deliver their business. In regional South Australia, two new programs are being rolled out that endeavour to contribute to this discussion. Artists are showing health practitioners new ways of engaging with their clients, creating more positive health outcomes, but also generating creative new ways of delivering health messages and practices. Concurrently, protocols and guidelines for artists working in mental health are also being developed that will better equip them for work in this arena. Both these initiatives will generate a more skilled workforce and employ more innovative models of delivery.

Contemporary community arts and cultural development practices are being used with health partners, their staff and community members who use their services to affect longer term integration in planning and resourcing their core business. This arts/health program promotes new models of practice that will have relevance beyond the immediate community. Some of these have been formulated specifically for local Indigenous groups, using comedy to tackle the topic of anti-smoking. Another works closely with Parkinson’s sufferers through the medium of dance, specifically learning to tango. The results are being evaluated through an interdisciplinary evidence-based approach that critiques the partnerships between health and the arts to demonstrate that community arts and cultural development methods can work for health partners in delivering their strategic objectives.

Concurrently, a complimentary long-standing partnership between regional service agencies in the arts and mental health is now responding to the call for assistance for artists. One of the main aims of the partnership is to increase opportunities for social connection using arts and culture as an opportunity to improve wellbeing. The program is now extending from a local regional project to a state-wide strategic approach and one of the first outcomes is the development of a set of workable, respectful, ethical standards for artists working with people with mental illness. The resource will assist artists to demonstrate best practice when working with people with mental health issues and to encourage people to realise their creative potential.