Arts in Health at Flinders Medical Centre: a model of practice

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Introducing art and culture into the life and fabric of health care services is now regarded as best practice internationally. There are many demonstrated benefits for health and wellbeing: from clinical outcomes for patients, support for staff in providing high-quality care, to the creation of welcoming and therapeutic physical and cultural environments for all. This poster presentation demonstrates the specific ways in which a multi-artform Arts in Health program contributes to health and wellbeing in a busy, acute care hospital environment. Based on a detailed analysis of the Arts in Health at FMC program in South Australia, it will show how different approaches to practice can produce different benefits, and suggest how the findings from this example can be translated to a range of rural health settings.

Arts in Health at FMC is one of the most ambitious and long-running programs of its kind in Australia. Since its inception in 1996, it has grown through many phases to its present role based within the Department of Allied Health, offering a comprehensive program encompassing exhibitions, performances, workshops, art-based therapies, environmental and public art works and special projects. In 2009 it was the subject of an in-depth, program-wide evaluation that captured feedback from many different perspectives, and led to a collaborative research process to analyse and articulate a ‘model of practice’. Drawing on learning from artists, program and hospital staff, different perspectives on practising art in an acute care setting were explored and analysed by means of a range of tools developed for the purpose. The process and its outcomes are being disseminated through two recent publications: Arts in Health at FMC—Program Report and Arts in Health at FMC—Towards a Model of Practice. The key elements of these publications will be featured, highlighting their significance for understanding how different approaches to art practice are applicable to a range of settings. Free hardcopies of Arts in Health at FMC—Towards a Model of Practice will be available for interested delegates.