

2011 International Symposium on Poetry and Medicine

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Medical Teaching Centre
Building 37
University of Warwick
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ABSTRACT



Title: Using Poetry in Dementia Care

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This presentation will examine the role poetry can play in improving care of patients with Dementia (PWD). Following an evaluated project in Primary Care in Gloucestershire, Poet Karen Hayes and GP Dr Simon Opher will look at the way in which poetry can unlock memories in PWD. The process of how Poetry can be created by a poet and the patients will be described. Using Case histories, the two presenters will show how a poet can be a valuable member of the care staff, and poems created in this project will be read to illustrate the benefits of this approach. The interface between clinical medicine and poetry can help to alter care and change attitudes in clinicians and other carers and these effects can be lasting. The poems created are filed in medical records and also provide a keepsake for patients and their relatives. The project has been shown to help rediscover what Kitwood described as personhood in PWD. At the same time, poems created by Karen but using the verbatim words of PWD are both beautiful and arresting and leave a lasting resonance. The authors were fascinated in the unique ways in which PWD use metaphor in and express themselves in rhythms and cadences more similar to poetry