Blending art and science in nurse education; the benefits and impact of creative partnerships

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Aim
This poster presents the benefits and impact of an innovative education partnership between lecturers from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queens University, Belfast and Arts Care, a unique Arts and Health Charity in Northern Ireland, to engage nursing students in life sciences.

Background
This project was funded by a Teaching Innovation Award from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queens University, Belfast, to explore creative ways of engaging year one undergraduate nursing students in learning anatomy and physiology. The complex organisation and function of the human body can be difficult to understand and many Nursing and Midwifery students lack confidence in their ability to study science.

Methodology
The project was facilitated through collaboration between teaching staff from the School of Nursing and Midwifery and Arts Care, Northern Ireland. This unique Arts and Health Charity believes in the benefits of creativity to well being. Artists from the charity facilitate participatory workshops and performances to make all forms of art accessible to patients, clients, residents and staff in health and social care setting across Northern Ireland. Twelve year one nursing students participated in a series of four workshops designed to creatively explore the cells, tissues and organs of the human body through the medium of felt. Facilitated by an artist from Arts Care, students and teachers translated their learning into striking felt images. The workshops were an environment of active and kinaesthetic learning, providing a unique and novel learning experience that helped students make sense of these challenging scientific concepts which are essential for professional nursing practice.

Benefits and impact
Students valued the opportunity to engage in active kinaesthetic learning
Creativity transformed and brought to life the students’ learning of the cells, tissues and organs of the human body
Students and staff in the project experienced the benefits of creativity to personal well being
Insight gained into how Arts Care makes all forms of creativity accessible to patients, clients and staff throughout the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland
The project culminated in the exhibition of a unique body of work which is currently on tour across Northern Ireland

Feedback from exhibition
Student; 'It is wonderful to see the pieces displayed - they have been framed and arranged beautifully. Thank you for such a fulfilling and meaningful experience. It really was a breath of fresh air.'
Visitor reaction; 'A unique and interesting perspective on parts of our bodies that are hidden from view - being able to look at these creative representations makes me reflect on them in a new way. Well done!'

If you would like further information about this project please contact:
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References
Chickering, A. W. & Gamson, Z. F. 1987 Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. AAHE Bulletin