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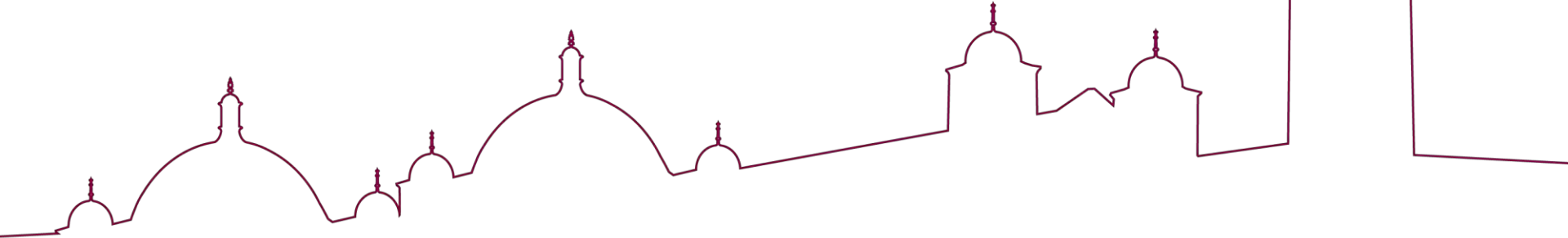
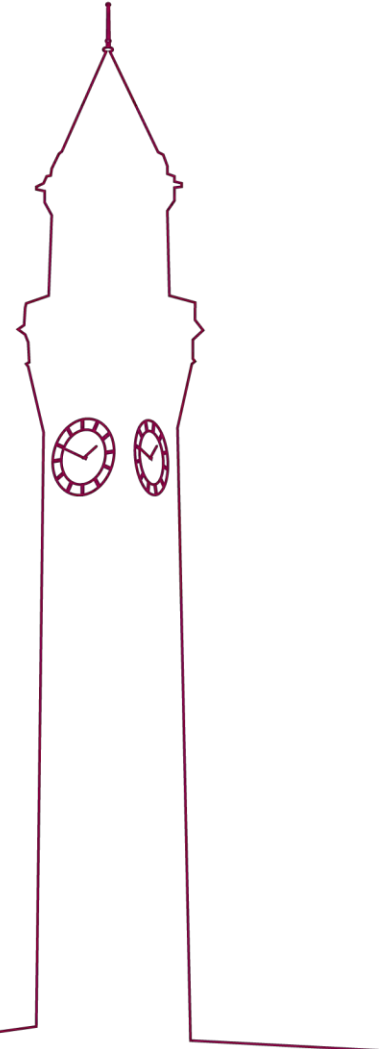
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MEDICAL AND  
DENTAL SCIENCES



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# Teaching Effective Communication Around Paediatric End of Life Care to Pre-registration Student Nurses: An Action Research project

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***Alison Reeves*** University of Worcester



# Project Aim

To explore the use of a communication workshop in developing *effective communication* in undergraduate nursing students and provide a *realistic professional context* for drama students studying Applied Theatre.



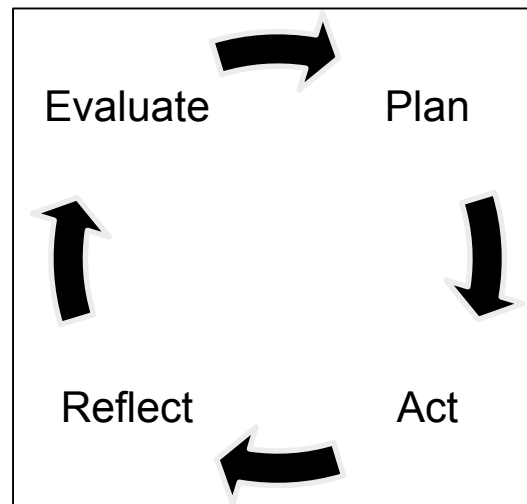
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# Action Research

Creating knowledge about practice  
Inform / Change / Improve



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# Applied Theatre

Forum theatre is a means of **facilitating participant (audience) engagement** to achieve a goal (such as developing communication skills) through **unrehearsed engagement in a performance**.

Spectators can stop the scene to suggest ideas, take the place of an actor and determine the direction of the scene..



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# Developing the communication workshop

- Drama and nursing student education
- Ethical considerations
- Preparatory work: collecting scenarios



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# Clinical Experience Scenario

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE SCENARIO OUTLINE
<p><i>Please return completed form to Richard this week</i></p>
<p>Briefly outline an interesting, difficult or challenging clinical situation you have faced or witnessed relating to palliative, end of life or bereavement care. Useful information to include; where it occurred (eg ward/clinic), who involved (eg doctor/physio/parent), what happened (eg scan results, bereavement talk). Remember to use pseudonyms!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- At a hospice</li><li>- 2.5 year old 'complex needs'</li><li>- end of life care</li><li>- 'in special bedroom' - performing hand+foot prints with parents</li></ul>
<p>What were the key difficulties / challenges?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Parents very upset</li><li>- Touching+ handling a deceased child</li><li>- Finding the right words to say</li><li>- involving/encouraging parents to 'touch'</li></ul>
<p>Outline how the issue was resolved or what you have learnt from the experience.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Following mentors instructions</li><li>- listening to parents</li><li>- reminding them off positive experiences of child's life to calm the situation</li><li>- music = spiritual care</li></ul>
<p>THANK YOU</p>
<p>For more information about this study please contact: Dr Sue Neilson <a href="mailto:s.j.neilson@bham.ac.uk">s.j.neilson@bham.ac.uk</a></p>



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# Methodology

## **Convenience Sample**

Year 1 Pre-registration student nurses

## **Recruitment**

Communication workshop

## **Data collection**

Questionnaire (pre and post workshop)

## **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis / descriptive statistics



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# Communication Workshop: Theory Session

## **Exploring communication across a variety of situations**

Such as breaking bad news (cancer diagnosis) or withdrawing treatment in an intensive care setting

## **using a range of media**

PowerPoint slides, audio, video and discussion

## **and introducing a simple communication checklist (PEAS & Cues)**

Checking that communication demonstrates appropriate pausing, empathy, acknowledgement of what was being said, a summary of the conversation and whether cues, such as body language, were effectively acted upon

## **to help participants identify good and poor aspects of communication.**



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# Communication skills checklist: PEAS & Cues

**Introduced as an aide-memoire for  
students to use in clinical practice**

**P** Pausing  
**E** Empathy  
**A** Acknowledging  
**S** Summarising

**Pick up Cues**



# Communication Workshop: Theory Session

- **Barriers**
- **Beliefs**
- **How we communicate**
- **Difficult Questions**
- **Tools**
- **Communication frameworks**



# Data Collection

## Pre- workshop questionnaire

How do you rate your communication in the following areas?

- *Ability to communicate clearly*
- *Ability to talk to a patient or relative death, dying or bereavement*

What communication training have you undertaken?

What do you hope to learn from the workshop?

Please describe any concerns you have about taking part in the project.

What support do you think you will need from the project leaders?

## Post-workshop questionnaire

How would you rate the impact of the workshop on your communication in the following areas?

- *Ability to communicate clearly*
- *Ability to talk to patient or relative about death, dying or bereavement*

What was good about the workshop?

- *What areas did not work well?*
- *What would have worked better?*

What have you learnt from working with students in another subject discipline?

Do you think the workshop has / will help you become a more effective communicator?



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# Findings: Participants

<b>Sample:</b> n=158	<b>Participants</b> n=100
<b>Adult</b>	77
<b>Child</b>	4
<b>Mental Health</b>	10
<b>Unknown</b>	9



# Ethical considerations

No concerns about participating	54%
Concerns about the emotional impact (child focus/personal circumstances)	7%
Identified support needs from project leaders <i>(compassion and emotional support and understanding)</i>	5%



# Key Themes

<b>Seeing and feeling</b>	<b>Theory to practice</b> (The drama) <i>contextualised what was taught</i> (PRN 29)  <b>Interactive building blocks</b> (seeing) ... <i>the outcomes of differences in communication</i> (PRN 20)
<b>Understanding</b>	<i>Better ways to approach a situation</i> (PRN 17)  (How to) <i>better deal with a tricky situation</i> (PRN 81)
<b>Reflective practice</b>	<i>It made me think about the way I have communicated in the past and how I can improve my communication in the future</i> (PRN 72)



# Unexpected Findings: Learning and Teaching

*An interesting and more engaging approach (PRN 61)*

*A different way of learning (74,95)*

*.... the drama helped me learn visually (3)*

*... informative, interesting, very engaging, very clear and understandable, compelling and insightful (38)*

*Easier to understand and learn through practical sessions (19,20)*

*... good to see the scenes acted out (6) and ... see the outcomes of differences in communication (20)*

*Showed me how to react and communicate in different settings (7)*



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# Was it useful?

	Yes	No	Not completed
Would you recommend this course to other students in the future?	93	3	4
Do you think the workshop has/will help you become a more effective communicator?	96	3	1

***Really enjoyable and informative*** (PRN 19)

***Audience participation .. on drama helped us to further improve and think about our own communication skills*** (PRN 92)

***A very good idea and way of learning (through) engaging with students (from) another subject discipline*** (PRN 11)



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# Action Research: The next steps

- Training digital resource
- Exploring further opportunities for inter-disciplinary learning
- Additional data collected (Empathy)



# Conclusions

## ***Successful workshop!***

The student nurses:

- purposefully engaged in a novel workshop exploring how good communication looks and feels.
- developed knowledge and skills through reflection and actively engage in implementing theory into practice.
- identified their learning deficits arising from new knowledge, informing future learning.
- were exposed to different approaches to learning enabling them to gain confidence in engaging in new learning activities.



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This module has ..

***.. helped me develop as a person and as a student*** (DPS 11)

***.. made me think about the way I have communicated in the past and how I can improve my communication in the future*** (PRN 72)

*With thanks to:*

*Dr Brian Nyatanga and the Drama and Performance Bachelor of Arts students*

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*It's not what you say it's how you say it*  
**Development of communication skills  
through the use of interactive  
performance**

Alison Reeves – University of Worcester



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# Introduction

- Project Aims
- Components of Care Education
- Development of *Don't Talk Like That!*
- Participation and Reflection through *Forum Theatre*
- Discussion of Research Findings
- Conclusions



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# Four Key Components of Care Education

- Modeling
- Dialogue
- Practice
- Confirmation

*'We have to show in our own behavior what it means to care. Thus we do not merely tell (our students) to care and give them texts to read on the subject, we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them.'* (Noddings 2007:190)



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# Communication skills for Applied Theatre

- Learning Outcomes
- Real World Context
- Ethical Approval
- Pre and post workshop questionnaires



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# Pre and post project questionnaire

Skills Audit					
How developed are your skills in the following areas?	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Don't know
1. Ability to communicate clearly					
2. Ability to lead a workshop					
3. Ability to facilitate group discussion					
4. Ability to take on a role in an Applied Theatre context					



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# Qualitative Questions

## Pre – Project Questionnaire – Drama and Performance students

- 1 What do you hope to learn from working with students in another subject discipline?
- 2 What do you think you need to know about Drama and Nursing before you can effectively take part in the project?
- 3 Have you any concerns about taking part in the project?
- 4 What support do you think you will need from the project leaders?

## Post- Project Questionnaire – Drama and Performance students

- 1 What have you learnt from working with students in another subject discipline?
- 2 What are the positive aspects of the project?
- 3 In what ways could the experience of taking part in the project be improved?
- 4 Would you recommend this work for your students in the future?



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# Performance Development

- Intensive working schedule
- Shaping Material
- Participatory elements
- Advanced Communication skills workshop
- Clinical Experience Scenarios



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# Clinical Experience Scenario

**Briefly outline an interesting, difficult or challenging clinical situation you have faced or witnessed relating to palliative, end of life or bereavement care.**

Infant patient on acute ward.

Patient was in acute heart failure and medical staff were of the opinion that she was nearing the end of her life and further intervention would not be in her best interests.

Consultant then informed the mother.

**What were the difficulties / challenges?**

Mother did not agree that no further intervention should be given.

Requested full resuscitation – did not accept that her child was going to die.

**Outline how the issue was resolved or what you learnt from the experience?**

Palliative care nurses sat down with Mum and had a very open and honest conversation about the professional opinion.

Supported Mum to accept child's imminent death and discussed where she wanted the child to die.



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# I don't want her to die



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# Possible responses from nurse:

- A Don't talk like that
- B It's not easy for you is it?
- C Says nothing – hold patient's hand
- D There's a time for all things – it's out of our control



# *Forum Theatre*

## **The Special Bedroom**

### **Communication skills: PEAS & Cues**

**P** Pausing

**E** Empathy

**A** Acknowledging

**S** Summarising

### **Pick up Cues**



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# Pre and Post Questionnaire Results

	1 -Pre	1-Post	2 -Pre	2-Post	3- Pre	3-Post	4-Pre	4-Post
Excellent	1	2	1	3	4	6	3	5
Very Good	9	10	4	8	4	5	6	7
Good	5	3	8	3	4	4	5	3
Poor			2	1	3		1	
No. of responses	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15



# Qualitative Data - Themes

- Understanding nursing perspective
- Empathy
- Using theatre as a tool
- Support
- Working together as a group



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# Noddings' Components of Care

'The capacity to care may be dependent on adequate experience in being cared for.' (Noddings 1992: 22).

'Dialogue permits us to talk about what we try to show. It gives learners opportunities to question "why," and it helps both parties to arrive at well – informed decisions.'

(Noddings 2002: 23).

'The experiences in which we immerse ourselves tend to produce a "mentality.....If we want to produce people who will care for another, then it makes sense to give students practice in caring and reflecting on that practice.'

(Noddings 2007: 228).



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# Conclusions

The performance offered much more than a training exercise and the drama techniques combined with the specialist nursing context ‘opens up the potential of the work from a functional transaction to a creative encounter.’  
(Brodzinski 2010:16)



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*Don't Talk Like That! The student  
experience of portraying  
empathy in a participatory  
performance.*

Speaker: Katisha Harris

Actors: Noah Kilworth & William Moore



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# Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938)

- Russian theatre practitioner.
- Pioneer of Naturalism.
- Creator of the Stanislavski System.
- Development of Emotion Memory.
- The psychophysical – ‘the dialogue between your body and your psyche’ (Merlin, 2007).

# *Don't Talk Like That*

Forum Theatre

Before bad news is broken:  
Noah Kilworth & William Moore

# Independent Research Project

- ‘An Exploration of the use of ‘Living the Part’ for character developments and the strengths and potential dangers of its use.’
- Six interviews with students from *Don't Talk Like That*.

# Authenticity

- ‘it’s just something about that, I felt like I’d be fraudulent about it almost and I didn’t trust myself to do a good enough job.’ (A)

# Emotionally Draining

- ‘I remember every body was quite overwhelmed emotionally by it.’  
(A)
- ‘it was very hard not to see [my child] as the one in [that scenario]’ (C).



# Safe Environment

- ‘Communicating with the rest of the group and people I trusted in the group’ (A)
- ‘expose ourselves right in front of everyone to the material and being given the opportunity to talk about it publicly’(C).

# Overlapping from 'Self' to 'Character'

- Emotion Memory – 'That type of memory which makes you relive the sensations you once felt' (Stanislavski, 1990).
- 'It's difficult to apply your own experiences and your own life when you're trying to look through the eyes of someone else and see their pain and understand where they are. The easiest way and most natural way is to apply everything that you've experienced yourself to their situation. You overlap it and find the connections and that way you're able to make a connection with the person in pain and understand them better' (C).

# Relaxation

- ‘An actor is like a sculptor: before you can start shaping an expressive figurine, you need to soften the clay – which, in this case, is your body’ (Merlin, 2007).
- Transitional separation from self to character.
- Barrier between self and work.

# Separation from empathy

- ‘The case studies were incredibly uncomfortable’(C).
- ‘I would connect with it, learn as much as possible and then use what I had learned previously to decompartmentalise and file it away but feel it first for all its pain and power’(C).



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Is the ability to empathise something that can be taught or is it an inherent ability that only certain people possess?

- Merlin, B. (2007) *The Complete Stanislavski Toolkit*, Nick Hern Books Limited, London.
- Stanislavski, C. (1990) *An Actor's Handbook: An alphabetical arrangement of concise statements on aspects of acting*. Edited and Translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. Methuen Drama, London.