Perishing Personhood

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Research and Creative Arts Fair

Professor Mark Gilbert

Spring 2022
A Study of Alzheimer’s (Sharon Kraft)

- Medicine and art connecting through drawings
- Special emphasis on the development of her dementia
- Effects of pandemic
- Focus on relationships
  - Patient
  - Physician
  - Caregiver
  - Family

March 7th, 2020

March 21st, 2021
Sharon Kraft

- My birthday buddy!
- Legal Secretary
- UNO Regents Scholarship Recipient
- World Traveler
- Mom of 3
- Wife of 60+ years
Recent Visits

Observations from drawings

- Isolation
- Growth on face
- Limited visiting time
- Memory lapse
- Detached
- Immobile
- Mood changes
- Stringy hair
- Frozen shoulder
- Depression/Anger
- Maintained spunk
Notable Experiences

Relationship between drawer and subject/model

• Lots of prompting
• Difficulty maintain conversation while drawing
• Hard to not draw with previous bias
• Displeasure with drawings from life
• Fear of new memories replacing old ones
Sharon’s Sketches
Drawings From Life

Continuous line (hand focus)

"I need my nails done."
"Can you break me out of here for a wedding."
"I can't lay over there forever."
"Then what did you do?"
"fart"
Drawings from Life
Drawings from Photo

Pre-diagnosis
Drawings from Photo

Post injury
Caregiver Perspective

- Dignity in Life
- Ebb and flow of disease
- Comfort in recognition over remembrance
- Where is the line of no longer living?
- No caregiver’s guide to dementia
  - Different for every patient
  - Remind yourself that the person you knew before dementia is still in there.
  - Respect refusal

"The greatest honor in life is to take care of those who took care of us’’
William Utermohlen
William Utermohlen
Medical/Scientific Takeaways

• Mental illness can be as debilitating as physical illness
• Healing effects of expression through art
• Communication – for both patient and provider
• Means of measuring decline and capabilities
• Serotonin release – stress responses affected
• Understanding the unseen
• Learning tool

Joseé St-Amant
Artistic Takeaways

- Connection to subject/model
- Benefits of multiple drawing sessions
- Expressing tone and emotion/storytelling
- Difference in drawing from life and from photo
- Exploration and thought process from dementia drawings
- Artistic means of coping

Navy Medical Art of the Abbot Collection
My Takeaway

• Growth in comfortability drawing from life
• The process can be more rewarding than the product
• Positive and respectful observation of disease
• Compassion over frustration
Art as research!

Observational approach

- Valuable data can be obtained
  - Balance between peace and pity towards subject
- Alternative perspective to statistical data
- Growth in medical humanities field
- Can create more in-depth conclusions

https://emergingartsleaders.wordpress.com/2015/11/19/a-case-for-research-in-the-arts/