

SIGNIFICANT ILLNESS:

CREATIVE REFLECTION TO SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT WITH EMOTIONALLY COMPLEX PATIENT NARRATIVES

Dr Emmanuel Oladipo
Dr Katherine Donald

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

THE CHALLENGE

How do we support students to understand illness as emotionally complex narratives without overwhelming them, in a way we can deliver at scale?

Narrative

Psychological safety

Process



THE DESIGN AIM

- Encourage a holistic understanding of illness
- Support engagement with clinically and emotionally complex content
- Protect (and enhance) student wellbeing through structured and creative reflection



THE MODEL

Story → Structured engagement → Creative Reflection



THE STORY

Jo's Story - Part 2



STRUCTURE AND CREATIVE REFLECTION

4 Principles and a Container

- Preparation
- Small-group Containment
- Guided Discussion
- Student Selected Creative Reflection*
- Recentre and What Next



THE SESSION – SUPPORTING TUTORS

Example Prompt Questions

- *Start by asking how the students are feeling*
- *How do the students feel this story of grief and loss would impact them if they were the A&E doctor caring for Jo when she attended with back pain?*



THE SESSION: SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Creative Reflection

LEGO-based reflection

Visual prompts – DIXIT Cards

Mindful colouring

Poetry and patient memorabilia



THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR THE LIFE OF
Savanna Carys Anastasia Rogers
30th July – 9th August 2024



by 2nd September at St Clement's Church, Manchester



THE SESSION: PATIENT CONNECTION

THE REACH AND RESPONSE

Delivered to 430 students, 320 responded, 74.42% response

Wellbeing

- 92.5% felt the session helped them reflect on their own wellbeing
- Students felt supported when observing the potentially difficult and emotive topics explored in this session

Preparedness

- 94% felt more prepared to handle emotive situations.
- Student developed a better understanding of what 'significant illness' may mean



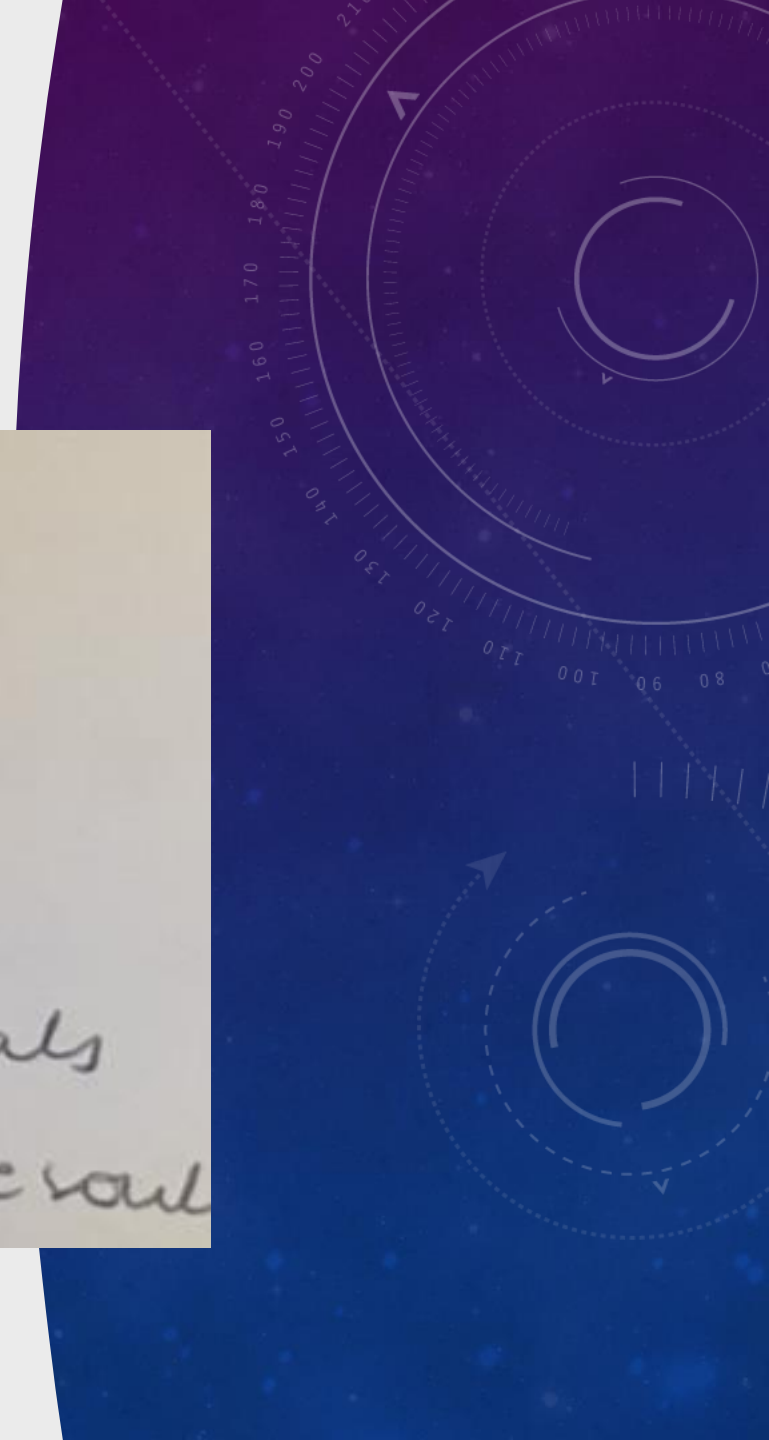
THE RESULTS: SELF AWARENESS AND PROCESSING

‘An incredibly powerful, thought-provoking session, in which I not only feel that I have learnt about such a personal experience of significant illness, but also about myself and how I can manage my reactions to such difficult, emotional situations’



THE RESULTS: HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF ILLNESS

Thank you so much for this session.
As medical students it is easy to
forget the clinical knowledge
we know relates to people
with real stories. We are so
lucky to have staff and individuals
who want us to keep our sensitive soul



THE RESULTS: BRINGING IT TOGETHER

- Engagement as **future clinicians** and **human listeners**.
- The design appeared to support **wellbeing**, **preparedness** and **emotional processing**.
- The approach offers a scalable way to retain the **value of patient narrative** while designing for **psychological safety**.



WHAT THIS OFFERS: A MODEL

Story + Structure + Creative Reflection = Safe Engagement

- Illness as narrative not just pathology
- Structure that provides safe emotional boundaries
- Creative reflection that facilitates deeper processing
- A process supporting development of empathy and wellbeing



FINAL THOUGHTS

- Emotionally Complex patient narratives need intentional educational design
- Creative reflection provides a structured way to process, not just discuss, emotional clinical material
- A scalable model can preserve, depth, humanity and psychological safety
- The approach supports empathy and wellbeing



SPECIAL THANKS + ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to our patient Jo Rogers and her family for sharing Susie with us.

Despite a short life, Susie's legacy will live long in the lives of many others.



QUESTIONS

