

# ART TO HEART: A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF STAFF CREATED ART ON THE ARTISTS AND NURSES OF TWO CARDIOVASCULAR HOSPITAL UNITS OF A MAJOR URBAN HOSPITAL

By

Mary Gwyn Bowen, RN, MA

Link to the University of Florida paper on the project:

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00011272/00001?search=art>

## Summary

The staff of the Cardiovascular Department of a major urban hospital was asked to make art to place along the hallways of two post-operative and post-procedure cardiovascular care units for the benefit of the patients.

The project goal initially, was to gage the effects of staff created art on the post-operative rehabilitation of cardiovascular surgery patients. In the process of implementing that goal it became apparent that staff participation in the art-making project was having a positive impact on the artists and the nursing staff. Interviews were conducted with the art makers and the nursing staff of the units to determine the effects of the art project on their daily work environment. Questions for both the nurses and the artists were developed to collect quantitative and qualitative data of these effects..

Fifteen artists and eighteen nurses were identified and invited to participate in the interviews. The responses from both artists and nurses were universally positive. Themes creating a narrative story emerged and were identified as follows.

Themes from the Nurses:

- The art gave them a sense of community and pride in their unit
- Created a focus for relaxation during their stressful day
- Felt it “brightened” and otherwise made the units “friendly” and

“inviting”

- Gave them a tool for motivating patients

Additional themes from the Nurses:

- All of the male nurses responding to the questionnaires expressed a preference for the artwork of Dr. Andre Churchwell

Themes from the Artists

- Described their participation as “honoring” or “gratifying”
- All expressed a positive experience
- A strict selection criteria did not hinder anyone’s artistic process significantly

All artists involved worked directly or indirectly for the cardiovascular institute of the Medical Center. Most of the nursing staff responded that they were familiar with the artists. It appears to have been a significant factor in the nurses expressing ownership and pride in the art. Charge Nurse, Diane Adcox responded, “We love our art!” Alyssa Ramirez, RN suggested an art opening “like other art galleries.” Leslie Potts, RN requested some of the art be moved to places of greater visibility.

Subject matter of the art may also have been a factor in the nurse responses. They could relate to the art and apply it to their personal frame of reference. The work of Dr. Andre Churchwell depicted through his art, the doctor patient relationship in a whimsical style. Was it the style or the subject matter that the nurses related to? And Medical Receptionist, Nancy Brown, exhibited an intricately patterned section from a quilt she was making. Some comments from viewers and nurses expressed a fondness for the art of quilting.

Selection criteria were distributed to the artists prior to the submission of their art. Criteria were based on previous research on appropriate art for a hospital setting. A committee was convened to choose the art based on the criteria. All of the artists responded to the selection criteria as not having significantly affected their process. Several artists expressed their desire to adhere to the criteria in order to make their artwork more helpful to the patients. MaryAnn Jorissen, Nurse Practitioner, sent updates on her artwork as she was painting to make sure her work was following the

selection criteria. Leslie Hale and Jessalyn Tate, both in cardiac research, focused on colors they felt would be cheerful for staff and patients.

The effects of staff created art on the nursing staff of two busy cardiovascular hospital units has been universally positive on both nurses and artists. A greater sense of community and ownership of the units was expressed by artists and nurses alike. Data collection on the effect of the art on patients is ongoing. The enthusiasm of staff has been noted and commented on by other visitors to the unit. Overall, the benefits uncovered, so far, in the Art to Heart Project point to the usefulness of staff created art on job satisfaction and stress reduction in the cardiovascular community of a major urban hospital.

Art to Heart©, the painting, is the symbol of the heart in motion for patients recovering from cardiac surgery or procedure, of the “big heart” of the cardiac nurses, and of the artists sharing their hearts through their art