

Discovery Meeting #12

June 14, 2010

Minutes



Photograph by Jennifer Roth

Present: Jean Basiner, Susan Bayley, Eric D'Alessandro, Linda DeHart, Chris Graefe, Pattie Heyman, Jared Kass, Bill Kennedy, Ellen Leigh, Nancy Lippincott, Dana Moore, Louisa Pepper, Pati Stillwater, Arthur Stowe, Pam Wilkins, Judy Young

Attending Via Skype: James Cavanaugh, Gail Ellison

Attending Via Conference Telephone: Amy Dunion

Welcome to new participants:

Jean Basiner, Dance/Movement Therapist with an MA in Expressive Therapies from Lesley University, Cambridge MA

Eric D'Alessandro, Program Coordinator, Massachusetts Cultural Council

Ellen Leigh, Psychotherapist, Photographer and Writer, Arlington MA.

Dana Moore, Psychotherapist at Brattleboro Retreat, Vermont, for law enforcement, fire and armed service personnel.

SCREENING OF PILOT DOCUMENTARY

The meeting opened with the screening of "Healing Words: Poetry and Medicine," James Cavanaugh's pilot documentary filmed at the Shands Hospital in Gainesville, FL and aired in 2008 on public television.

PROCEEDINGS

Discussion of "Healing Words:"

Pattie Heyman said this film is revolutionary, not only because it is examining the role of arts in the healing of patients, but the MDs were reciting poetry and taking an active role in the artistic creation and healing.

Susan Bayley observed that this is exactly the mission of the proposed documentary, "The Art of Health: Creativity and Healthcare" (TAH) to bring into view the power of the arts that are already being practiced and have the potential to be practiced in our existing medical system, to create the conversation that will engage everyone, and to build from there.

James Cavanaugh agreed, he says he is asking for people to suspend their disbelief about the power of the arts. This is the arena that we are playing in, he said, and he invited any one of us participants to undertake writing a mission statement that captures the scope of our work.

Eric D'Alessandro was "struck by the buy-in of the practitioners in the film,"

wanted to know how much clinical study has been done. "Qualitative is important," he said, "what about quantitative?" The public funding world requires data to make the case.

Pam Wilkins noted that an extensive resource of research is available on the website of the Society for the Arts in Healthcare. "SAH is the warehouse for research that is being done," she said.

She then asserted that a discussion group of CEO's at SAH's 2010 national conference indicated that they are not looking for more studies. "Do we need to prove with a quantitative study that a lot of people like ice cream?" she asked. She introduced the term "appreciative inquiry" as a method of discerning the need and what already exists. We need to get "Healing Words" shown now, and show that there is already a lot done.

Jared Kass agreed. He said the research is already there: Herb Benson introduced the Relaxation Response 30 years ago. Dr. Michael Okun in "Healing Words" said he has the capability to look at single neurons in the brain and see the effects of poetry on the neurons.

Artists need to link up to the larger world of psychology; arts is not the only tool, and cure is not the only result. Some of the patients were clinically helped, others were not, but their sense of dignity, humanity were helped. It is important to consider the difference between being healed and being humanized.

This film can build bridges to others parts of the clinical world, Jared continued, not simply reaching to other artists. Expressing anguish actually produces a deeper level of relaxation than simple medication.

Dana Moore said that his work at the Brattleboro Retreat encompasses psychotherapy as well as acupuncture and other healing modalities, and that they are all producing healing results for the people who come, normally for one-or two-week sessions. They have many PTSD and stress-related patients. The Retreat is in the process of adding new modalities to offer to their clients.

Pati Stillwater said that we have lost our sense of self, we have an "anti-body" culture, and we need to take our body back, to take a role in our own healing.

Bill Kennedy said "Healing Words" is sensational, and shows that what changes experience for people is metaphor, not controlled studies. "Let's have anti-controlled studies," he said.

Arthur Stowe recommended two websites: kurzweilAI.net and singularityhub.com. KurzweilAI.net features the big thoughts of today's big thinkers examining the confluence of accelerating revolutions that are shaping our future world, and the inside story on new technological and social realities from the pioneers actively working in these arenas. Singularityhub.com asks – and answers – "What will happen in 10 years?" The Future Is Here Today... Robots, Genetics, AI, Longevity, Singularity

Pam Wilkins said that in her work as an art consultant to hospitals, she finds that hospitals are funding programs again that are presented powerfully. It must be sold

such that management understands what it is doing for the patients. As examples she described a multi-million dollar grant to The University of Iowa to assess children coming to the hospital emergency room as to reactions to arts, touch, music, and more; and a photo exhibit just agreed-to for Mt. Auburn Hospital in Cambridge.

INQUIRY OF THE DAY

James spoke of our work as the blending of art, science, and health and giving it the status of a new art form. This is wording from the most recent version of The Art of Health Statement, which we are reviewing at this meeting. Comments and edits will be made and a final version will be sent to all participants to use in networking TAH.

"I think that 'creativity' is a more important word than 'art,' in our work," he said; there are thousands, unlimited ways that we can take responsibility for our own lives, rather than passively being treated by others. We are opening the door, legitimizing that the doctor doesn't have to close the door when he says that he is a poet.

Pati Stillwater noted how devastating it is to be told we not only have no responsibility, but no access to our own care – that we are instructed to just do what the doctor says. "It is a huge undertaking to develop a new way of looking at healthcare in America," she said.

Ellen Leigh affirmed that it is important to respect the individual, as well as the artist and the doctor, in treatment.

Pati noted how patients in "Healing Words" showed immediate response to their participation in healing art, it could be seen in their faces, that they were being healed, even when – in some cases - their disease was not being cured.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- James and Gail announced great news in the search for an intern: they had placed an ad on Craig's List and got 24 applicants in 24 hours – and talented, qualified people who are willing to work for free! They expect to have one or more interns in place within two weeks.
- Look for an intern who can help us with the Discovery website.
- Two letters of intent have been submitted to potential funders, a third is in progress, and they have others in their sights.
- They are considering a direct mail piece to directly solicit funds.
- The 501 c 3 entity is in place and they are ready to accept funds.
- We need to revisit the conversation with SAH of a cooperative relationship or partnership, and also to how we can contribute to the SAH newsletter in a way that gives our work exposure and moves it forward.

DISCUSSION

Bill Kennedy suggested that we look into getting well-known physicians to present/comment on "Healing Words" on PBS, to feature it during fundraising drives, to get it out into the world and open the discussion for TAH.

It was also suggested that "Healing Words," as our strongest statement for the making of "The Art of Health" documentary, should be included in each of our grant applications.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Next Discovery Meetings: Summer break, then:

September 20

October 18

November 15

December 13

By Susan Bayley for Discovery Meeting • www.discoverymeeting.org