

BACCN Annual Conference 2016  
September 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, Glasgow



# Getting to the heART of Critical Care Nursing:



*The use of creative writing to reflectively explore critical care experiences*



*Facilitated by Vikki Park*

BACCN Treasurer for the Northern Regional Committee  
*Senior Lecturer, Northumbria University*



# Getting to the heART of Critical Care Nursing:



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*The aims of the workshop are to:*

- Use creative writing to explore the critical care experience
- Develop creatively written accounts of critical care experiences  
(written from factual events)
- Use a reflective model for further exploration.

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## **Robert Frost (1923)**

“A poem begins with a lump in the throat;  
a home-sickness or a love-sickness.  
It is a reaching-out toward expression;  
an effort to find fulfilment.

A complete poem is one where  
an emotion has found its thought  
and the thought has found the words.”

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## A Stay in Critical Care (2016)

“A **stay** begins with a lump in the throat;  
a home-sickness or a love-sickness.  
It is a reaching-out toward expression;  
an effort to find fulfilment.

A **Critical Care stay** is one where  
an emotion has found its thought  
**but** the thought **cannot find** the words.”

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**1: Have you written poetry or engaged in creative writing as an adult before?**

Yes     No

**2: Have you written anything 'creatively' to do with health or nursing?**

Yes     No

**3: Do you like reading, writing or listening to poetry or creative writing?**

Yes     No     Sometimes

***Why is this?***

**4: What words do you associate with the experience of critical care?**

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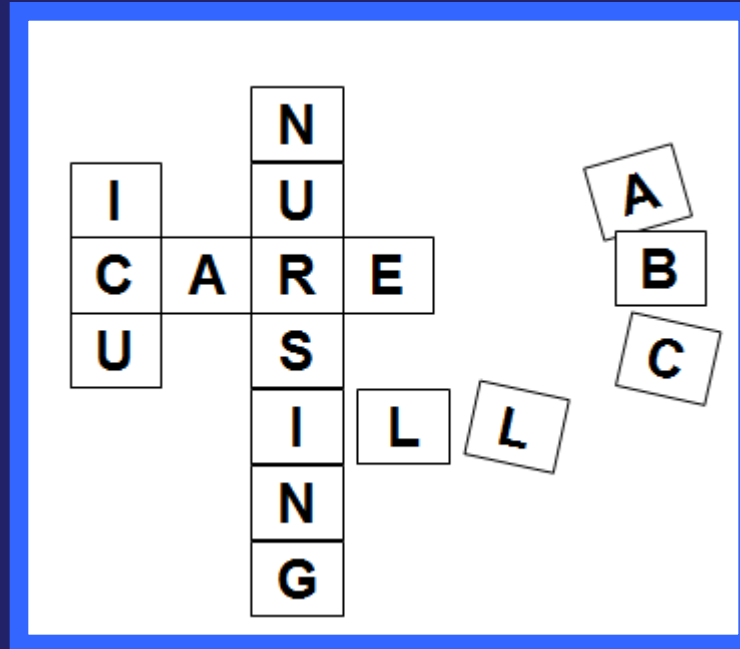
## YOUR WORDS...

*Descriptive*

*Emotional*

*Favourites*

*Thoughts*



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## What can we write?

What we've seen...

...or heard

Our thoughts & feelings...

...or things we've done.

### **Positive Poems:**

Using words that  
make us feel better

### **Descriptive Ditties:**

Words that really take  
the reader on a journey.

### **Real Rhymes:**

Recreating reality to make  
sense of experiences.

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## Why write?



### HOLISTIC CARE

#### FCC

*Family Centred Care*

- *Communication*
- *Relationships*
- *Involvement*
- *New norms in ITU*
- *Physical effects*

#### MDT

*Multi-Disciplinary Team*

*U*nderstanding of roles  
*S*hared experiences and support  
*E*motional connections with others  
  
*P*otential for collaboration  
*O*pen up a dialogue about sensitive issues  
*E*xplore holistic aspects of patient care  
*M*ulti-disciplinary team working  
*S*afe space to think and reflect

#### PCC

*Patient Centred Care*

- *The Art of Noticing*
- *↑ compassion*
- *↑ quality of care*
- *↑ empathy*
- *Knowing patient needs*

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## Is there an evidence base for creative writing?

Research acknowledges numerous detrimental and long term effects for patients and their families who 'survive critical illness', including physical, psychological and social 'problems' (Brett 2009).

There is an "impressive base of accumulating evidence, which is beginning to reveal how creative and expressive writing may promote health and emotional well-being" (Lowe 2006, p.67).

Bailey *et al.* (2016, p.2) report a number of potential benefits from creative writing:

- staff may experience reductions in 'compassion fatigue' when providing 'emotionally demanding care' for those with 'complex needs'
- staff may have reduced work-related stress and anxiety
- increased understanding and articulation of the patient experience may occur and this might 'promote and sustain meaningful, person-centred care'.

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The noise of the place, so thunderous and loud  
Machines whir, alarms ring, such strange sound  
A voice silenced, lost and unable to speak  
But I see you among this, so quiet, so weak.

Bright lights in the morning and all through the night  
One continuous day, with no end in sight  
What day is it, who am I and why am I here?  
But I see you among this, and always stay near.

Many faces, different uniforms and strange turns of phrase  
How are you supposed to understand, left in a daze?  
You can't sit, can't drink, you're unable to stand  
But I see you among this and offer a hand.

To nurse is an art, to master technical skill  
To communicate, liaise and administer a pill  
But the essence of nursing is to be compassionate and care  
And I see you among this, my patient, I am there.

“I see you...  
...my patient in I.C.U”

*Written by Vikki Park*

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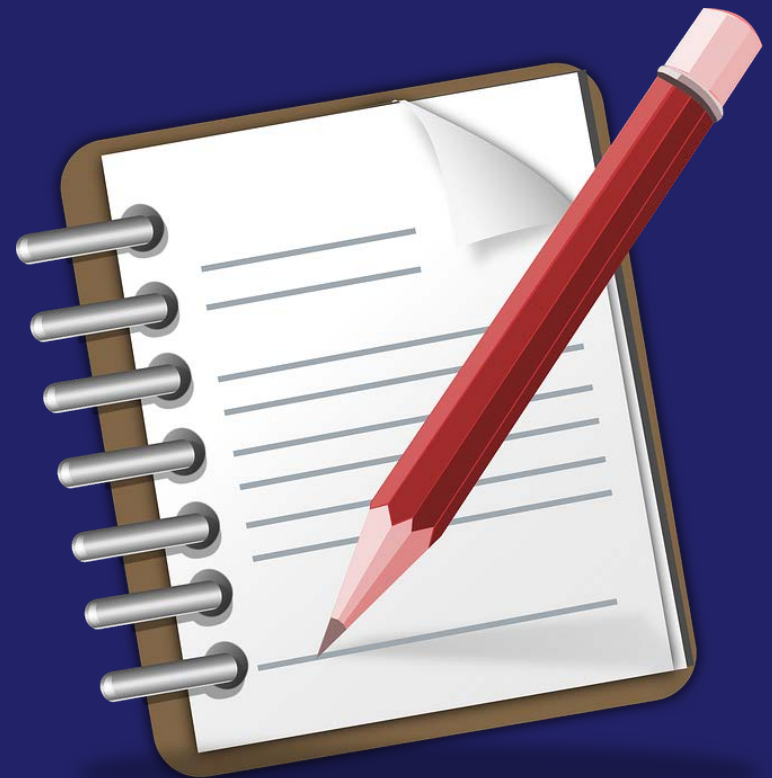
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## Capturing Critical Care experiences in words

*Write 2 sentences*

*Use words generated  
so far to help*

*Talk to each other to  
share your ideas*



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## Expanding your work ... ...and choosing a factual Critical Care experience

*Pick an experience &  
write a bit more*

*Expand your sentences  
on a chosen topic*

*Perhaps produce a  
group poem?*



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Creative writing is an approach which may aid recovery following critical illness and might assist health care professionals to deliver optimal care.

For clinical staff, there is increased interest in the contribution that creative writing and poetry can offer in terms of reflective practice and critical thinking.



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Bailey et al. (2016 p.2) recommend that creative writing techniques could be added to reflective practice models.

Reflective models could then be used with creative writing as a means of facilitating continual professional development, critical thinking and reflective practice.

## Gibbs Reflective Cycle



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## ■ What Happened?

I focused on the patient amongst all of the ITU equipment

## ■ Your Feelings?

Empathetic and sad for the patient; being altruistic and an advocate

## ■ Evaluation

‘Good’ - recognition & increased situational awareness

‘Bad’ - the patient distress

## ■ Analysis

PCC, the Art of Noticing, the 6 C’s, Professional Conduct

## ■ Conclusion

Prevention of patient distress preferred rather than management

## ■ Action Plan

Delirium screen, reduce stimuli i.e. noise / light, clear communication.



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- Critical care experiences can be challenging to understand and articulate.
- Creative writing is an approach which can help with this process and has been shown to have numerous benefits.
- It is important to remember the patient in the midst of the complex care they receive.
- Increased exploration of the use of creative writing within health care practice is warranted.



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*What are your thoughts at the end of the workshop?*

**5: Are you likely to use creative writing in the future?**

Yes    No    Maybe

**6: What do you think the value of creative writing in critical care is?**

**7: Please add any additional comments about the workshop:**

*Thank you for joining me this afternoon!*

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## References

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