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## 'The best kind of care is like sunshine' - accessing older people's views through creative writing

### Conference or Workshop Item

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## ABSTRACT RCN NURSING OLDER PEOPLE CONFERENCE 2009

### **‘The best kind of care is like sunshine’- accessing older people’s views through creative writing**

**Theme:** User involvement

**Presentation:** Concurrent

#### **Abstract:**

This project aimed to develop a user involvement project in which older people were supported to creatively explore and describe their experiences of care encounters in a long term care home. The changes to physical and cognitive health that often precede the move to a care home (Beringer and Crawford 2003) may create practical difficulties for older people accessing opportunities for engagement in activities that could inform the development of the care services that support them. Therefore, creative writing was identified as an everyday medium to support older people in accessing experience of living in a care homes that they may not necessarily articulate. The art of writing allows an individual to externalise their thoughts and feelings whilst retaining control over who else they share these feelings with. Images and metaphor conjured up in poetry may also enable an individual to see experiences or self in a very different way (Darling and Fuller 2005). Further work in institutional settings suggests that new insights can assist in a person's ability to make sense of their reality and restore a sense of self and identity in this context (Harthill et al 2004).

Seven workshops were led by a professional writer over an eight week period. The processes and outcomes from the project will be used to inform health and social care education and practice. This paper reports on the analysis of the creative writings of the older people which clustered under three themes: relationships; biography and experiences of care.

#### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the session, delegates will be able to:

#### **References:**

- Beringer, T.R.O. and Crawford, V.L.S. (2003) Admissions to elderly care institutions in the United Kingdom. *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology* ,13, 95-101.
- Darling J, and Fuller C (2005) *The poetry Cure*. Newcastle. Bloodaxe poetry
- Harthill G et al (2004) A case study. The Kingfisher project, In: Sampson F ( ed) (2004) *Creative writing in health and social care*. London Jessica Kingsley