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Through the lens of young people: use of photography in hospital design

Whilst arts in hospitals have been perceived as therapeutic to patients, this paper will share evidence and research to support that photography and photo-elicitation has an important role in preference and choice about hospital design. The paper will initially draw on studies that used participatory photography in children’s hospital design in international settings.

More specifically, this keynote presentation will share the use of participatory photography to empower young people to influence and shape hospital designs, thus resulting in design by young people for young people. A study will be shared that was undertaken by the author in the UK, which included data collection techniques of photo-elicitation and photo-interviews within a hospital-based young people’s advisory group. Interviews centred on supporting young people to review and react to sets of photographs in order to explore hospital design preference. Data analysis was iterative and data sets were compared to wider literature and evidence in the field.

Strengths and limitations of participatory photography will be shared. This study was interesting as it provided an in-depth exploration of young peoples’ responses to the set of photographs. But even more interesting was that through the method, it provided young people with an opportunity to engage in an enjoyable activity, but gave them a platform to have choice and voice in their hospital design.