



[GUEST BLOG] Patients' empowerment through Healthcare Clowning



Healthcare Clowning International Meeting - Credit: Jakob Polacek

This is a guest post from Monica Culen, Founder and CEO of RED NOSES International and President of the European Federation of Healthcare Clowning Organisations*

As a Healthcare Clowning organisation, we are convinced that we can only find solutions if we work together with other stakeholders in the healthcare sector and understand well-being in a positive and holistic way that includes body and mind. In fact, and because health is not simply the absence of disease but a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, RED NOSES firmly believes that a holistic approach to healthcare is the best way to serve our patients.

From 4-6 April 2018, RED NOSES Clowndoctors International hosted the Healthcare Clowning International Meeting – HCM 2018 in Vienna. More than 400 healthcare clowning artists and managers, medical professionals, researchers and representatives from international organisations came together on the occasion to discuss, among others, how the Healthcare Clowning sector can further support and empower patients.



At the conference one of the keynote speeches on the topic of "The Empowerment of Patients" was given by Nicola Bedlington of the European Patients' Forum who shared a vision of high-quality, equitable and patient centred health and related care. This keynote sparked the following article, in which we want to tell you more about how we can work together to empower patients.

Patient-centred care and psychosocial support to patients

The keynote started out from a key principle: "Not doing TO a patient but rather doing better WITH the patient" should be the aim in all aspects of patient care.

RED NOSES shares the vision that the quality of psychosocial care can significantly increase by putting the person, and not the illness, back in the centre. For this reason the interactions with the clowndoctors are designed to fully include the patients and are shaped by the patients' wishes, emotional needs and individual situation. In fact, healthcare clowns empower patients by giving them a choice and by allowing them to take charge.



For us, patient centred also means having an integrated approach that focuses on patients, families and medical staff. Humour has the potential to create a powerful emotional connection between people, enhancing and stimulating social interactions (Martin, 2007). Thus, healthcare clowning can have a positive effect on the patient-provider relationship. As Peter Krajmer, PhD (Clinical Psychologist) explained during the HCM 2018 "Clowns bring doctors and patients closer together - and put them in the same team".

Scientific studies have shown that humour and laughter can promote psychosocial health at various levels and through various ways. By maintaining a positive emotional state, humour may help to sustain a body's basic healing mechanisms (McGhee, 2010).

We believe that with the transformative power of humour and laughter, we can help shape a different healthcare environment and a change in perspective for children and grown-ups in medical treatment.

*RED NOSES International is an artistic organisation currently working in 11 countries to empower hospitalised persons and other vulnerable audiences. For more information please visit www.rednoses.eu

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