

## UKCCC Conference Reflection

In March, we (four second year medical students) attended the UK Conference for Clinical Communication. We had never set foot in a conference space before – let alone spoken! We travelled to Manchester, not quite knowing what to expect, rehearsing our mini speeches to ourselves (and to each other) over and over in an attempt to memorise them. Along with our tutor, Dr Juliet Brown, we shared some of our workpieces from first year in a talk entitled “Compulsory Creativity in Clinical Encounters”. These were a collection of art pieces based off of our clinical encounters, a mix of drawings and poetry.

After a fantastic welcome keynote by Professor Lorraine Noble, who showed some really fascinating research regarding how consultations actually end up structured, and a welcome poem by Emmanuel Oladipo, we attended a workshop delivered in British Sign Language aimed at helping clinicians to communicate better with deaf, deafened and hard of hearing patients in spite of the communication barrier. We left with five key useful points for consultations in future:

1. Give context
2. Reduce background noise
3. Add gestures
4. Ask the person what way they prefer to communicate rather than assuming
5. Always look at the deaf person, not the interpreter

After lunch, we attended a presentation called “De-mystifying empathy to develop authenticity in practice”, by Michelle Fromage. There was a lot of discussion around the table on how to express empathy in a genuine way, and how to cultivate empathy in medical students so that it grows into a skill rather than disappearing. It was a truly lovely experience because most people there were doctors interested in teaching empathy, and that meant they were really happy to have medical students at the table to involve in discussions and ideas.

Finally, at about 3pm, it was our turn.

All of our art pieces were based on experiences from our HCA shifts. We presented each one in turn, talking explaining the story behind it. We explained how useful art had been for us as a means of reflection and of processing our experiences, especially so early on in medicine. The people attending were very attentive, interested in what we had to say, and certainly expressed an admiration for the COGConnect model, which we think quite a few wanted to implement in their medical schools!

To finish the day, we listened to Emmanuel Oladipo talking about his experience of using poetry as a means of self-understanding and self-directed empathy. He spoke about how he started writing poetry in third year, after an exam didn't go as planned, and how he has kept it up since. It was really special to hear such a similar talk to ours given by a stranger who clearly had found art just as valuable regarding the emotional side of medicine.

The four of us had an absolutely wonderful time and are really grateful to have been given the opportunity to attend.



Georgia Higgins, Katie Henderson, Ella White, and Eleanor Jones