

# EBMT 2015 - Physicians Abstract (including Data and Quality Management)

*Topic area: Quality Management Group*

*Topic: 33. Sharing best practices*

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## Devised performance as a tool for public engagement in acute haematological cancers

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**Preferred Method of Presentation:** Oral or Poster Presentation

**Introduction:** Dramatic representations of cancer patients play an important role in engaging the public. However, mainstream formats such as Hollywood film, risk sentimentalising the subjective experience of the patient and 'dumbing down' the science. This research tests how an 'alternative' form of live performance engages audiences.

**Materials (or patients) and methods:** A performance (entitled *bloodlines*) was created through 'devising', that is, through group collaboration rather than from an individually authored play script. This methodology encouraged knowledge exchange within the creative team (a survivor of adult leukaemia, his stem cell donor, medical experts and artists) and resulted in an unconventional dramatic form combining lectures and dance. Six public performances took place between July 2013 and April 2014 in the United Kingdom and Belgium. Audience responses were gathered through post-show questionnaires.

**Results:** Analysis of qualitative data indicates that the performance conveyed common experiences of haematological cancer patients in ways that cancer survivors felt were accurate, and that laypeople found engaging and thought-provoking (79%). Likewise, key scientific and medical concepts were 'conveyed in interesting and effective ways' (93%). A key finding was that the 'hybrid' form of the performance (a result of the multi-disciplinary devising process) powerfully conveyed *both* the subjective experience and key elements of biomedical science – that reflects the experience of patients who are confronted with unfamiliar scientific data.

**Image / Graph:**



**Conclusion:** 'Alternative' dramatic forms, created in collaboration with medical experts and cancer survivors, can be considered a valid tool of redressing 'sentimental' and 'dumbed down' representations of the acute haematological cancer patient. In addition to increasing cancer literacy among laypeople, benefits of such activities include providing cathartic experiences for cancer survivors, supporting bone marrow registry campaigns and increased empathy for cancer patients from caregivers.

**References:** Mermikides, Alex (2013) The scientist center stage. *Nature Immunology*, 14(5), pp. 416-418.

Abstract image: 'Total Body Irradiation': dancer/choreographer Adam Kirkham in *bloodlines*.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None Declared

**Keywords:** acute haematological cancers, bone marrow registry, cancer survivors, devised performance, public engagement