

Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Organisation: Performing Medicine

Region: London/national

Designed for: Healthcare professionals and nonclinical hospital staff

“Absolutely vital work from @PerformingMed1 @clodensemble supporting our healthcare workers and frontline NHS staff during #Covid19 #ProtectTheNHS #PPE please share widely with NHS frontline #PPEKit”



Image credit: Photo from the National Theatre production of War Horse (Photo by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg) featured in Performing Medicine’s resource *Coping with PPE*.

Introduction

Performing Medicine is a charitable organisation delivering creative training programmes for healthcare professionals and students, with a focus on staff wellbeing, compassionate care and effective communication. Our sessions are led by our team of Associate Artists, who draw on arts-based approaches to explore skills relevant to clinical practice. Since 2001 we have worked with more than 16,000 health professionals and students and we have long-standing partnerships with NHS Trusts and Higher Education Institutions across the UK. Our work has received the Times Higher Excellence and Innovation Award and has been published in the *Lancet*, *Medical Education* and *BMJ Medical Humanities*.

We created shareable digital resources addressing some of the needs of healthcare professionals during the Covid-19 crisis. Following a request from Dr Beth Thomas at UCLH, who highlighted the

challenges that staff were facing in wearing heavy and restrictive PPE for prolonged periods of time, we invited actors, performers and puppeteers to share their insights. Used to wearing restrictive costumes, masks, puppets, animatronics and prosthetics, these artists offered simple tips that could help healthcare professionals when wearing PPE, accompanied by some photos of their extraordinary outfits. From this, we created a top tips PDF resource, with advice from performers and creatives from companies and productions such as *War Horse*, *In the Night Garden Live*, *Kneehigh*, *His Dark Materials* and *Figs in Wigs*.

We also responded to a need for wellbeing resources for healthcare professionals during this period by developing a PDF resource and video exploring simple movement-based self-care and stress-management exercises. Our Associate Artist Angelica Grohmann led healthcare professionals through a series of movements, suitable for before, during, and after work, to help them to take a moment to reconnect with their body, prepare, energise, refresh, recover and wind down.

Funders

London Community Response Fund. (The British Academy are funding a continuation of this work going forward but not the work we've already described.)

Partners

University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
London Community Response Fund

Who is it for?

Health care professionals – nurses and doctors at all levels and specialities, health visitors and allied health professionals

Non-clinical hospital staff – porters, receptionists, managers, technicians, administrators

Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

Both

How many people took/are taking part?

1000+

Where is it happening?

All across the country via social media but the project was partnered with UCLH so had a focus in London, and was circulated directly to staff at UCLH through their internal communications streams.

For how long has it been happening?

It began in March 2020 and is still being shared online

What were/are the main outputs?

Three digital resources for healthcare professionals:

- 1) Interactive PDF with top tips for coping with PPE
- 2) Interactive PDF with self-care for before, during and after work
- 3) Video with guided self-care for before, during and after work

Media coverage in specialised healthcare press

Discussion and sharing of the resources on social media

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

- Supporting healthcare staff mental and physical wellbeing
- Improving healthcare staff stamina, comfort and communication while wearing PPE

- Better interactions and quality of care for patients – we articulate this in our [Circle of Care](#) framework, developed with Guy's and St Thomas Trust, which re-envisioned compassionate healthcare by describing a multi-directional flow of care between healthcare professionals & colleagues, patients & carers. It positions 'self-care' – the way healthcare professionals care for themselves – as fundamental to achieving effective healthcare.
- Illustrating the role that the arts can play in supporting healthcare professionals during this period

Evaluation & Feedback

We have not formally evaluated this work; however, we have been awarded funding from the British Academy for a research project with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust to expand on this project and to include evaluation of the work going forward.

Twitter:

What a fantastic resource! Thanks @uclhcolleagues, @HUfH_DrBethand @PerformingMed1 for these #toptips for #ppe #usingppe #FOAMed

Absolutely vital work from @PerformingMed1 @clodensemble supporting our healthcare workers and frontline NHS staff during #Covid19 Black heart #ProtectTheNHS #PPE please share widely with NHS frontline #PPEKit

Really useful!

Loving collaborating with @PerformingMed1 again! There's always much that can be learned from & with others outside of our fields #StrongerTogetherCheck out this new resource created with @uclh and @KarenShawIPC to #StaywellinPPE#hscsm #medtwitter #MedEd #FOAMed #selfcare

I feel like I'm yelling at everyone all day with the N95 + surgical mask for PPE extension! I'd love tips on how to sound more empathic (even more "normal").

When artists and actors help healthcare workers adorned in PPE be more humane!

This is a really useful resource -and lovely example of how arts and health can learn from and support each other, especially at this time -thanks @PerformingMed1 #hospitalarts

Interesting perspectives on coping with wearing PPE from those who in the Arts who perform in heavy and claustrophobic costumes. @NHSLothianMedEd @rosielCM @PerformingMed1

When artists and actors help healthcare workers adorned in PPE be more humane!

Great Read for Our [#PPE](#) Costumed [#FrontLineHeroes](#)! Coping with Personal Protective Equipment

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

The resources have been very warmly received, with lots of positive feedback from healthcare professionals saying how useful they are. It also seems to have responded to a desire from arts professionals to offer their skills, advice and capacity during this period when healthcare professionals are under so much pressure. Covid has created a new context where because of the limited capacity of

healthcare professionals, and the increased capacity of under-employed artists, there is an obvious space to fill.

It was fantastic that we were asked to create these resources by UCLH. Staff at UCLH were aware of our wider work in delivering creative training programmes for healthcare professionals and students so they knew how effective arts-based approaches can be and reached out to us. This is different to the norm, where we would have approached them.

We were able to respond very quickly (within the first few weeks of the pandemic). Covid does seem to have allowed things to happen faster, with less bureaucracy to get through.

There does seem to be broader awareness within the healthcare staff population that the arts has something to offer.

We were pleased with the press coverage for Coping with PPE – it was featured in [BMJ “Seven days of medicine”](#), Hackney Gazette, Nursing Standard, Arts Professional and Clive Parkinson’s blog.

Challenges: It has been difficult to disseminate the resources as widely as possible and within the restrictions of healthcare institutions where not all social media platforms can be used. They recommended that a PDF shareable over WhatsApp was the best approach. However, it was relatively straightforward to get it into their internal communications and on their YouTube and social channels.

Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

We are reaching more people, particularly healthcare staff.

What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

We’ve developed new skills in digital design: we worked closely with a designer to build interactive resources quickly.

What would you say has made this project possible?

- The partnership with UCLH
- Funding from London Community Response Fund
- Willingness from artists and arts organisations to help
- Existing relationships and knowledge of arts-based approaches

Further information

https://performingmedicine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Recovery-Room_.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWF-XDJ17KQ>

<https://performingmedicine.com/blog/coping-with-ppe/>

<https://performingmedicine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coping-with-PPE-Performing-Medicine.pdf>