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## AHNS Cancer Prevention Service Community Service Award Proposal

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**(a) Title: “Expressions of the Head & Neck Cancer Journey”: A Visual Art Experience for Head & Neck Oncology Patients**

**(b) Targeted Population**

We target two populations. First, *patients with any type of head and neck cancer (HNC) in any phase of their treatment journey*. These HNC patients are invited to paint with a certified art therapist to express non-verbal facets of their cancer journey. This gives a singular look into the lived experience of having HNC. The second target population is *all visitors to the outpatient Kirklin Clinic* at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). The artworks created by patients with HNC will be assembled and displayed to raise awareness of HNC in the general population. We will reach patients, caregivers, and medical personnel less familiar with HNC. The display will be located by our head & neck clinic, which is next to the general laboratory area, a highly trafficked space. This location will allow us to reach a wide range of visitors and significantly increase awareness of HNC. Increased awareness will lead to prevention.

**(c) Method/Design**

Each patient has a unique perspective and the perception of their cancer journey will be different. The best way to learn about HNC is to interact with patients who have experienced treatment and are coping with treatment side effects in survivorship or dealing with their own mortality in the palliative setting. Our goal is to raise awareness of HNC and to mitigate the stigma historically associated with HNC. To do this, we will invite patients with HNC to express some aspect of their cancer journey through painting (a visual art experience).

The UAB Division of Head and Neck Surgical Oncology partnered with UAB Arts in Medicine to launch this new endeavor. A facilitated visual art station will be set up in the large patient waiting area which serves the HNS clinic, the Supportive Care and Survivorship Clinics, and the Tobacco Cessation Clinic. Canvases, brushes, and paints will be provided for patients to create in the moment or to take home with them for later expression. A certified art therapist, will be present to help facilitate patients’ creative expression and to encourage artistic confidence and technique with the materials. Three dates have been established on February 23, March 2, and March 9, 2022 from 1:00-5:00pm. These are our busiest HNC clinic days and we hope to reach as many patients as possible. We have advertised in advance through our HNC support group, head & neck, oral surgery, radiation oncology, medical oncology, and survivorship clinics.

The completed canvases will be collected and assembled into a collage under the guidance of one of our HNC survivors with professional curatorial experience. The collage will be unveiled during OHNCA (April 3-9, 2022) in Kirklin Clinic between the head & neck, supportive care, and tobacco cessation clinics which are co-located on the main floor of the outpatient clinic which serves over half a million patients a year. This will become a permanent display to maintain increased awareness of HNC and ongoing education that will lead to prevention.



A Visual Art Experience for Head & Neck Oncology Patients

A blue and white flyer for an art experience. The text includes: "Come CREATE with us (or pick up an art kit to go!) No Artistic Experience Necessary 1-5pm February 23 March 2 March 9 in the ENT Clinic 2nd Floor The Kirklin Clinic". To the right is a photo of a person painting on a canvas.

Completed paintings will be used to create an art piece in honor of Oral Head & Neck Cancer Awareness Week

A pink rectangular graphic with white text that reads "WANT TO KNOW MORE? Email or Call Lauren laurenedwards@uabmc.edu 205-996-1488".

Project facilitated by UAB Arts in Medicine Art Therapist, Valerie Hanks, ATR-P



**(d) Expected Outcome**

We anticipate 10 patients to participate at each session resulting in approximately 30 canvases to be assembled into the collage. The collage will be viewed by hundreds of clinic visitors every day as they pass through Kirklin Clinic from the hospital and to the lab from all the other clinical areas in the building.

We expect the following outcomes:

- 1) *A powerful collage of unique HNC experiences.* Personal experiences are more influential than a list of facts in a brochure.
- 2) *A supportive environment for HNC patients to express their experience in visual media.* Our certified art therapist has expertise working with patients who have little or no artistic experience or confidence. This allows the event to be available and enjoyed by all HNC patients and their caregivers. It will provide a unique opportunity for transmission of HNC personal experiences that can have lasting impact on patients at risk, for whom these images may serve as a powerful preventive, cautionary tale, or redemption narrative.
- 3) *A long-term display to bring awareness to HNC year long.* The permanent display will allow us to bring awareness to thousands of patients and medical personnel.

**(e) Expected Impact**

Alabama’s rate of oral and oropharyngeal cancer ranks *fifth* in the US and *seventh* in the number of deaths from these cancers. The percent of adults who smoke cigarettes in Alabama is 21.5%, which is *higher* than the national rate of 17.1%, making Alabama *eighth* in the nation for adult smoking prevalence. In addition, there is significant sun exposure, viral exposures, and idiopathic cases of HNC. There is a clear need to raise awareness in Alabama.

We anticipate our proposal to have the following impact:

- 1) *Provide a unique method of support to our HNC patients to improve quality of life.* Art therapy can reduce asthenia and anxiety. By recognizing the difficult journey a HNC patient experiences, validating, and allowing for creative expression, we anticipate an improvement in quality of life even with our time limited event.
- 2) *Reduce the stigma surrounding HNC.* The collage demonstrates to HNC patients that they are not alone. The exhibit personalizes the journey to others. The opportunity for visual expression will empower patients to share the breadth of the path that leads to HNC.
- 3) *Provide mindfulness and reflection for HNC patients and caregivers.* Reflection on prior experiences can decrease the risk of recidivism of bad habits or exposures, leading to prevention.
- 4) *Raise awareness of HNC among patients and health care providers in Alabama.* The rates of HNC and associated risk factors remain high in Alabama, demanding us to find new and creative ways to raise awareness.

**(f) Estimated Expenses and Potential Funding**

1. Certified art therapist	UAB Arts in Medicine employee
2. Canvases, brushes, paint for 30-50 patients	Donated by UAB Arts in Medicine
3. Table and chairs	Provided by UAB facilities
4. Advertising	0
5. Mounting, preservation and permanent display of final collage	1000.00
Total costs.....	\$1000.00

We were fortunate and excited to form a novel partnership with UAB Arts in Medicine, which specializes in patient-centered experiential art events with expertise in translational health humanities. They bring expertise, materials, and artistic and financial resources to this event. Our primary cost lies in establishing the collage as a permanent display. This is important in order to increase the number of visitors to the collage and increase our overall impact on head and neck cancer prevention.