

# Victoria Tischler



Victoria has worked in clinical, cultural, charity and academic sectors. She was Associate Professor at the University of Nottingham for 12 years where she retains an honorary position.

Her research interests focus on creativity and health, specifically in the area of dementia care. She has built a strong profile in public engagement activities, working with the media, artists and as a curator. She is co-executive editor of Arts and Health. She sits on the scientific advisory board for the Boots UK archive. She is a Trustee for Paintings in Hospitals and external examiner for the University of Manchester. She joined UWL as Professor in January 2017.

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by ANA M. VERNIA

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## **Ana M. Vernia**

Art is part of people's lives, but your activity has gone beyond and you have proposed artistic activity to improve dementia. When and why do you think of art as a special medicine?

**AV** What artistic project would you highlight and why?

## **Victoria Tischler**

A current art discussion project led by Ben Uri Arts and Dementia Institute is finding really promising results for people with advanced dementia. We are using artworks from the Ben Uri collection that focus on themes of identity and migration, taking them into a care home, and using them to stimulate discussion with care home residents. Some interesting conversations have resulted eg focusing on beliefs, history and personal stories about war time. This demonstrates the potential for art to create meaningful conversation and connections between people.

**AV** Do you think that in the UK the artistic activities reach the whole population?

**VT** No, despite many art galleries and museums being free to enter, the demographic profile of attendees is limited. There is a lot of interest in diversifying audiences and reaching out to those who may not normally visit cultural institutions. Also there are many people who cannot visit such places eg those in hospital or care homes. Hence it is important to think of innovative ways to bring culture to them eg through taking art to them or using technology.

**AV** You work art in general, especially the visual and graphic. What do you think of music as a complement to your projects?

**VT** Yes music is a complement but it stands alone as a therapeutic modality. In fact most research to date points to the therapeutic role of music eg in calming people, relieving pain and enriching quality of life.

**AV** From your point of view, would be necessary a greater economic support and human resources, by public institutions?

**VT** The arts and health field is growing internationally and gaining positive attention from policy makers and commissioners. We do need to argue for more resources though as some still see culture as a nice ,add on' and one that saves public money rather than a field to invest in



**AV** You have visited other countries and have an international vision, how do you see the situation of people with dementias and their relationship with artistic activities in other countries?

**VT** There is interesting work going on globally, places like Canada, Japan and Finland are particularly innovative. Eg in Japan they often integrate nurseries with care homes to encourage intergenerational work.

**AV** I know you have different research related to art and dementia. Do you think that the research has advanced a lot or is there still a long way to go?

**VT** There is a lot happening currently but still a long way to go. In particular we need better quality evidence eg prospective studies, randomised controlled trials and use of innovative methodologies that integrate interdisciplinary perspectives.

**AV** From your point of view, what are the necessary resources that a researcher needs to be able to investigate in dementia and art.

**VT** A great interdisciplinary team and being open to new ideas.

**AV** If you could change three things in the current world, what would you change?

**VT** peace, tolerance, care for the environment

**AV** Thank you very much for your attention and your time for ARTSEDUCA.◆