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Chronic Pain in a family context: an art project informed by lived experience
Pat Walton, University of Cumbria, UK

The Project
My research aims to visualise the issues experienced by families who are coping with chronic pain - as patients, spouses and children.

Pain is still widely considered a phenomenon restricted to the sufferer's experience, yet, it has as it were a rippling effect on the sufferer's social circle, particularly the immediate family relationships.

I am proposing to create a body of photographic images by translating the sheaf of emotions into pictures which may provide sufferers and their families with a tool to improve understanding, communication and ultimately family life. Additionally, this work will show the complexity of the phenomenon of chronic pain to people unaffected by those intricate issues who therefore might hold a naive understanding of its impact on daily life.

The aim is to produce a body of work based on the research into the impact of parental chronic pain on family life through conversations with patients, their partners and their children. I will explore whether potential issues can be dealt with more effectively with help of the much more immediateness of photographic imagery over an intellectual understanding on the basis of text or speech.

Together with the theories of photography in particular, I am also reflecting on the strengths of art in health and wellbeing and why I feel it is an appropriate medium to address issues concerning chronic pain.

"Artistic works in music, dance, and visual arts are a media for expressions of meaning and the 'voice' to suffering which is inadequately expressed in words. Artistic expressions are the conduit to personal and universal experiences of suffering and, in return, provide relief and give meaning to that experience" (Davis, A.A.; Davis, M.P., 2010. Art in medicine and the art of grief. Progress in Palliative Care, 18(5), pp. 266-269)

Further Information
Please visit my website for previous work on the impact of Fibromyalgia on daily life:
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