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1. J Holist Nurs. 2013 Dec 4. [Epub ahead of print]

Humor in the "Twilight Zone": My Work as a Medical Clown With Patients With Dementia.

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Medical clowning has been primarily identified with working with children in pediatrics wards in hospitals. Over the past decade, more and more medical clowns have been working with adults and with patients with dementia as part of holistic care. Along with traditional medical care by hospital staff, the medical clown treats the patient's emotional side. Furthermore, medical clowning has unique advantages in working with patients with dementia. Several studies have shown that humor assists in improving the quality of life of patients with dementia. The clown, as the ultimate comic figure, creates interactions with patients based on humor, which empowers, calms, and strengthens the patient while reinforcing the patient's connection with the surroundings. Medical clowning is an interdisciplinary therapeutic art, and the medical clown has a "kit" of multiple skills (including humor, drama, music, and dance), all of which have a beneficial, therapeutic impact on patients. The current article presents and analyzes case studies from my work as a medical clown with patients with dementia.

PMID: 24305659 [PubMed - as supplied by publisher]

2. Clin Pediatr (Phila). 2013 Dec;52(12):1168-72. doi: 10.1177/0009922813502257. Epub 2013 Sep 11.

The effect of a medical clown on pain during intravenous access in the pediatric emergency department: a randomized prospective pilot study.

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Background. We report the effect of the presence of a medical clown during insertion of an intravenous catheter during their emergency department visit. Methods. Prospectively randomized to either the presence or absence of a male medical clown during the procedure. Pain was assessed using the Faces Pain Scale-Revised in children 4 to 7 years old, and visual analog scales in children 8 years and older. Parental situational anxiety was recorded using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory after the procedure. Results. The presence of a medical clown during a painful procedure in the pediatric emergency department tended to improve pain scores in children younger than 7 years. Parental situational anxiety was significantly reduced in parents of children older than 8 years ($P = .02$). Conclusion. Therapeutic clowns are useful for diminishing pain and anxiety during painful procedures being performed on children in the emergency department.

PMID: 24028842 [PubMed - in process]

3. BMC Pediatr. 2013 Oct 10;13:166. doi: 10.1186/1471-2431-13-166.

Clowning as a supportive measure in paediatrics - a survey of clowns, parents and nursing staff.

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BACKGROUND: Hospital clowns, also known as clown doctors, can help paediatric patients with the stress of a hospitalization and to circumvent the accompanying feelings of fear, helplessness and sadness, thus supporting the healing process. The objectives of the present study were to clarify the structural and procedural conditions of paediatric clowning in Germany and to document the evaluations of hospital clowns, parents and hospital staff.

METHODS: A nationwide online survey of hospital clowns currently active in paediatric departments and an accompanying field evaluation in Hamburg hospitals with surveys of parents and hospital staff were conducted. In addition to items developed specifically for the study regarding general conditions, procedures, assessments of effects and attitudes, the Work Satisfaction Scale was used. The sample included 87 hospital clowns, 37 parents and 43 hospital staff members.

RESULTS: The online survey showed that the hospital clowns are well-trained, motivated and generally satisfied with their work. By their own estimate, they primarily boost morale and promote imagination in the patients. However, hospital clowns also desire better interdisciplinary collaboration and financial security as well as more recognition of their work. The Hamburg field study confirmed the positive results of the clown survey. According to the data, a clown intervention boosts morale and reduces stress in the patients. Moreover, there are practically no side effects. Both parents and hospital staff stated that the patients as well as they themselves benefited from the intervention.

CONCLUSIONS: The results match those of previous studies and give a very positive picture of hospital clowning, so that its routine use and expansion thereof can be recommended. Furthermore, the intervention should be subject to the rules of evidence-based medicine like other medical treatments.

PMCID: PMC3851858

PMID: 24112744 [PubMed - in process]

4. Clin Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2013 Jul 12. [Epub ahead of print]

Therapeutic clowning in paediatric practice.

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Over the past 30 years, there has been much research into the health benefits of humour and laughter. Although often viewed very positively, rigorous evaluation of the therapeutic effect of clowning is complex. Clowning is a multi-modal intervention, which may have an impact on medical conditions, procedures, family functioning and health care teams. Clowns help children to adapt to their hospital surroundings and can distract from, and demystify, painful or frightening procedures through 'doses of fun' to complement traditional clinical interventions. This paper provides a review of the paediatric literature and reveals studies looking at the effect of clown interventions on various practical procedures and individual medical conditions, and the effects of clowning within clinical teams.

PMID: 23855014 [PubMed - as supplied by publisher]

5. J Child Health Care. 2013 Jul 1. [Epub ahead of print]

More than just clowns - Clown Doctor rounds and their impact for children, families and staff.

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Admission to hospital is recognised as a difficult time for children and families. This study explored clown doctor activities in an acute paediatric setting and the impact their activities have on children, their families, other health professionals and clown doctors themselves. We used observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with children and parents and staff and clown doctors and results provide a rich description of the work of clown doctors. The major themes were 'the encounter - in the moment' of the interaction of the child and the clown doctor and 'beyond the encounter'. The findings show that the impact of clown doctor visits is experienced beyond the immediate interaction, and this has not been clearly articulated in previous studies. This study highlights the multifaceted and complex nature of the work of the clown doctors and the high level of skill required as they modify and interpret play, activities and environment based on individual need and response.

PMID: 23818149 [PubMed - as supplied by publisher]

6. Int J Qual Stud Health Well-being. 2013 Jan 4;8:1-8. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v8i0.18907. [Article attached](#)

Joyful and serious intentions in the work of hospital clowns: a meta-analysis based on a 7-year research project conducted in three parts.

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The present meta-analysis focuses on a 7-year research project entitled "Hospital clowns-in encounters with ailing children" and funded by the Swedish Childhood Cancer Foundation. The aim of the meta-analysis, which is based on the project's three studies, was to attempt to achieve a deeper psychological and more nuanced understanding of the unique encounters taking place between the hospital clowns and ailing children in the study. The methodological procedures were qualitative and included 51 interviews with four informant groups: the clowns, staff, children, and their parents. The meta-analysis revealed the unique aspects of hospital clowns' work with respect to: a) a quality of care that transcends boundaries, that is, a magical safe area where demands and adjustment were temporarily set aside and where the lighter side of life took precedence; b) a non-demanding quality of care, where joy could be experienced without requiring something in return, where the child's terms mattered and where the child perspective was clearly in focus; and c) a defusing quality of care, which is expressed as a positive counterweight that was otherwise lacking in medical care, where the hospital clowns used different solutions that bypassed regular hospital routines by temporarily distracting and making things easier for the children, parents, and staff in various care situations. Finally, the aim of the theoretical framework, in its synthesizing form, was to promote further

psychological understanding of the area of humor that exists between fantasy and reality-an intermediate or transitional area that the hospital clowns created together with the children. In this transitional area, the hospital clowns' unique contribution can be interpreted, in psychological terms, as being available as a vicarious therapeutic clown figure in a magical world that parallels reality.

PMCID: PMC3538281

PMID: 23336988 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

7. Int J Qual Stud Health Well-being. 2012;7. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v7i0.11862. Epub 2012 Feb 24.

Magical attachment: Children in magical relations with hospital clowns.

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The aim of the present study was to achieve a theoretical understanding of several different-age children's experiences of magic relations with hospital clowns in the context of medical care, and to do so using psychological theory and a child perspective. The method used was qualitative and focused on nine children. The results showed that age was important to consider in better understanding how the children experienced the relation with the hospital clowns, how they described the magical aspects of the encounter and how they viewed the importance of clown encounters to their own well-being. The present theoretical interpretation characterized the encounter with hospital clowns as a magical safe area, an intermediate area between fantasy and reality. The discussion presented a line of reasoning concerning a magical attachment between the child and the hospital clowns, stating that this attachment: a) comprised a temporary relation; b) gave anonymity; c) entailed reversed roles; and d) created an emotional experience of boundary-transcending opportunities.

PMCID: PMC3286793

PMID: 22371813 [PubMed]

8. Med Anthropol. 2012;31(6):459-76. doi: 10.1080/01459740.2012.674991.

Tackling indifference--clowning, dementia, and the articulation of a sensitive body.

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In this auto-ethnographic study, I focus on a special form of clowning for people at an advanced stage of dementia. The miMakkus clown is presented as a specialist in contact with people with whom communication is no longer possible by the usual (linguistic, cognitive) means. I illustrate how the miMakkus clown tries to reach people with dementia, focusing specifically on the role of the sensitive body as an instrument for attunement. As I demonstrate, in their contact, the clown and the person with dementia are involved in a process of mutual articulation.

PMID: 22985107 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

9. Fertil Steril. 2011 May;95(6):2127-30. doi: 10.1016/j.fertnstert.2010.12.016. Epub 2011 Jan 6.

The effect of medical clowning on pregnancy rates after in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer.

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This experimental prospective quasi-randomized study examining the impact of a medical clowning encounter after embryo transfer (ET) after in vitro fertilization (IVF) found that the pregnancy rate in the intervention group was 36.4%, compared with 20.2% in the control group (adjusted odds ratio, 2.67; 95% confidence interval, 1.36-5.24). Medical clowning as an adjunct to IVF-ET may have a beneficial effect on pregnancy rates and deserves further investigation.

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PMID: 21211796 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

10. Telemed J E Health. 2011 May;17(4):316-8. doi: 10.1089/tmj.2010.0166. Epub 2011 Apr 2.

Humour sans frontieres: the feasibility of providing clown care at a distance.

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Clown care has been shown to have health-related benefits and is a well-established part of the routine in many children's hospitals. However, children who have been admitted to general hospitals or who are being cared for at home cannot usually enjoy visits by Clown Doctors. Therefore, the aim of this work was to investigate whether an existing telemedicine network could be used to improve equity of access to humor for sick children, specifically those who are hospitalized away from the nearest clown-enabled hospital or who are being cared for at home. Using videoconferencing, we conducted regular clown outreach links from The Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane, Australia, to children in regional hospitals and to sick children in their homes. Using a program of performance, which was modified for delivery by videoconference, teleclowning was found to be feasible. Further work is required to determine whether the health-related benefits that accrue from in-person clowning are successfully translated to the video-based modality.

PMID: 21457119 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

11. Klin Padiatr. 2011 Mar;223(2):74-8. doi: 10.1055/s-0030-1267932. Epub 2010 Nov 17.

Do clown visits improve psychological and sense of physical well-being of

hospitalized pediatric patients? A randomized-controlled trial.

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The study tested whether clown visits would be associated with an increase in psychological and perceived physical well-being of pediatric patients. Patients (6-14 years old) were randomized to a clown visit (n=50) or no-visit control (n=50). Patients and parents were administered a modified version of the KINDL-R questionnaire at pretest, immediately after the clown visit (posttest), and at a 4-h follow-up. The experimental group showed an increase in self-reported and parent-reported psychological well-being at posttest. However, these effects were not maintained at follow-up. There was no effect of the clown visit on perceived physical well-being. It is concluded that clown visits appear to improve psychological well-being of pediatric patients, but the effects may only be short lived.

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PMID: 21086245 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

12. Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 2011;2011:732394. doi: 10.1093/ecam/nej008. Epub 2011 Mar 13.

Physiological and emotional responses of disabled children to therapeutic clowns: a pilot study.

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This pilot study examined the effects of Therapeutic Clowning on inpatients in a pediatric rehabilitation hospital. Ten disabled children with varied physical and verbal expressive abilities participated in all or portions of the data collection protocol. Employing a mixed-method, single-subject ABAB study design, measures of physiological arousal, emotion and behavior were obtained from eight children under two conditions-television exposure and therapeutic clown interventions. Four peripheral autonomic nervous system (ANS) signals were recorded as measures of physiological arousal; these signals were analyzed with respect to measures of emotion (verbal self reports of mood) and behavior (facial expressions and vocalizations). Semistructured interviews were completed with verbally expressive children (n = 7) and nurses of participating children (n = 13). Significant differences among children were found in response to the clown intervention relative to television exposure. Physiologically, changes in ANS signals occurred either more frequently or in different patterns. Emotionally, children's (self) and nurses' (observed) reports of mood were elevated positively. Behaviorally, children exhibited more positive and fewer negative facial expressions and vocalizations of emotion during the clown intervention. Content and themes extracted from the interviews corroborated these findings. The results suggest that this popular psychosocial intervention has a direct and positive impact on hospitalized children. This pilot study contributes to the current understanding of the importance of alternative approaches in promoting well-being within healthcare settings.

PMCID: PMC3137396

PMID: 21799690 [PubMed]

13. Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 2011;2011:879125. doi: 10.1093/ecam/neq064. Epub 2011 Mar 15.

Clowns benefit children hospitalized for respiratory pathologies.

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The study aims at evaluating health-generating function of humor therapy in a hospital ward hosting children suffering from respiratory pathologies. The main scope of this study is to investigate possible positive effects of the presence of a clown on both the clinical evolution of the on-going disease, and on some physiological and pain parameters. Forty-three children with respiratory pathologies participated in the study: 21 of them belonged to the experimental group (EG) and 22 children to the control group (CG). During their hospitalization, the children of the EG interacted with two clowns who were experienced in the field of pediatric intervention. All participants were evaluated with respect to clinical progress and to a series of physiological and pain measures both before and after the clown interaction. When compared with the CG, EG children showed an earlier disappearance of the pathological symptoms. Moreover, the interaction of the clown with the children led to a statistically significant lowering of diastolic blood pressure, respiratory frequency and temperature in the EG as compared with the control group. The other two parameters of systolic pressure and heart frequency yielded results in the same direction, without reaching statistical significance. A similar health-inducing effect of clown presence was observed on pain parameters, both by self evaluation and assessment by nurses. Taken together, our data indicate that the presence of clowns in the ward has a possible health-inducing effect. Thus, humor can be seen as an easy-to-use, inexpensive and natural therapeutic modality to be used within different therapeutic settings.

PMCID: PMC3137769

PMID: 21785637 [PubMed]

14. J Child Sex Abus. 2010 Mar;19(2):128-40. doi: 10.1080/10538711003622752.

Laughing through this pain: medical clowning during examination of sexually abused children: an innovative approach.

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This study examined the role of medical clowns during medical examinations of children who were sexually abused. Three case studies are described, illustrating diverse interactions among the victimized child, the medical clown, and the medical forensic examiner during medical forensic examinations held at the Tene Center for Sexually Abused Children, Poria-Pade Medical Center, Israel. The results indicated that medical clowns play a unique role both in lowering anxiety and fear among children before and during the unpleasant forensic examination as well as in mitigating potential retraumatization of the sexual abuse event resulting from the medical examination. The medical clown was found to assist in creating a pleasant and calm atmosphere, thus improving the child's cooperation during the examination.

PMID: 20390783 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

15. Soc Work Health Care. 2010;49(6):581-98. doi: 10.1080/00981380903520475.

Medical clowning: even adults deserve a dream.

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The article examines the significance of the integration of medical clowns as an intervention strategy with adult outpatients suffering from chronic illnesses. The study is based on content analysis of the documentation of the work of two medical clowns over two years. The dominant theme involves the definition of the clown's role and includes perspectives on his integration into the hospital's multidisciplinary medical staff and his impact on the staff and on patients and their families. The finding is discussed in light of the dual role of the medical social worker as coordinator and as a case manager, and the challenge of integrating medical clowns in treatment of adult patients. There is room for further exploration of the contribution of medical clowns to assisting and improving the quality of life for patients and hospital staff.

PMID: 20640968 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

16. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2009 Jul 8;(3):CD006447. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD006447.pub2.

Non-pharmacological interventions for assisting the induction of anaesthesia in children.

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Comment in

J Adv Nurs. 2010 Apr;66(4):738-42.

BACKGROUND: Induction of general anaesthesia can be distressing for children. Non-pharmacological methods for reducing anxiety and improving co-operation may avoid the adverse effects of preoperative sedation.

OBJECTIVES: To assess the effects of non-pharmacological interventions in assisting induction of anaesthesia in children by reducing their anxiety, distress or increasing their co-operation.

SEARCH STRATEGY: We searched CENTRAL (The Cochrane Library 2009, Issue 1). We searched the following databases from inception to 14th December 2008: MEDLINE, PsycINFO, CINAHL, DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS, Web of Science and EMBASE.

SELECTION CRITERIA: We included randomized controlled trials of a non-pharmacological intervention implemented on the day of surgery or anaesthesia.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS: Two authors independently extracted data and assessed risk of bias in trials.

MAIN RESULTS: We included 17 trials, all from developed countries, involving 1796 children, their parents or both. Eight trials assessed parental presence. None showed significant differences in anxiety or co-operation of children during induction, except for one where parental presence was significantly less effective than midazolam in reducing children's anxiety at induction. Six trials assessed interventions for children. Preparation with a computer package improved

co-operation compared with parental presence (one trial). Children playing hand-held video games before induction were significantly less anxious than controls or premedicated children (one trial). Compared with controls, clown doctors reduced anxiety in children (modified Yale Preoperative Anxiety Scale (mYPAS): mean difference (MD) 30.75 95% CI 15.14 to 46.36; one trial). In children undergoing hypnosis, there was a nonsignificant trend towards reduced anxiety during induction (mYPAS < 24: risk ratio (RR) 0.59 95% CI 0.33 to 1.04 - 39% versus 68%: one trial) compared with midazolam. A low sensory environment improved children's co-operation at induction (RR 0.66, 95% CI 0.45 to 0.95; one trial) and no effect on children's anxiety was found for music therapy (one trial). Parental interventions were assessed in three trials. Children of parents having acupuncture compared with parental sham-acupuncture were less anxious during induction (mYPAS MD 17, 95% CI 3.49 to 30.51) and more children were co-operative (RR 0.63, 95% CI 0.4 to 0.99). Parental anxiety was also significantly reduced in this trial. In two trials, a video viewed preoperatively did not show effects on child or parental outcomes.

AUTHORS' CONCLUSIONS: This review shows that the presence of parents during induction of general anaesthesia does not reduce their child's anxiety. Promising non-pharmacological interventions such as parental acupuncture; clown doctors; hypnotherapy; low sensory stimulation; and hand-held video games needs to be investigated further.

PMID: 19588390 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

17. Paediatr Anaesth. 2009 Mar;19(3):262-6. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-9592.2008.02903.x. Epub 2008 Dec 23.

Clowns for the prevention of preoperative anxiety in children: a randomized controlled trial.

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OBJECTIVE: To determine if specially trained professional clowns allayed preoperative anxiety and resulted in a smooth anesthetic induction compared to the use of midazolam or no intervention.

METHODS: This was a randomized, controlled, and blinded study conducted with children 3-8 years of age undergoing general anesthesia and elective outpatient surgery. Patients were assigned to one of three groups: Group 1 did not receive midazolam or clown presence; group 2 received 0.5 mg x kg(-1) oral midazolam 30 min before surgery up to a maximum of 15 mg; and group 3 had two specially trained clowns present upon arrival to the preoperative holding area and throughout operating room (OR) entrance and mask application for inhalation induction of anesthesia. The children were videotaped for later grading.

RESULTS: The clown group had a statistically significant lower modified-Yale Preoperative Anxiety Scale score in the preoperative holding area compared to the control and midazolam group. The clowns' effect on anxiety reduction continued when the children entered the OR but was equal at this point to the midazolam group. Upon application of the anesthesia mask no significant differences were detected between the groups.

CONCLUSIONS: This study found that the use of preoperative medically trained clowns for children undergoing surgery can significantly alleviate preoperative anxiety. However, clowns do not have any effect once the anesthesia mask is introduced.

PMID: 19143948 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

18. J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry. 2008 Sep;47(9):983-6. doi: 10.1097/CHI.Ob013e31817f1273.

But seriously: clowning in children's mental health.

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PMID: 18714194 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

19. CMAJ. 2008 Aug 12;179(4):313-5. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.080691.

Clowning around sets patients at ease.

Watson S.

PMCID: PMC2492963

PMID: 18695174 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

20. Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 2008 Mar;5(1):17-25. doi: 10.1093/ecam/nem033.

The life threatened child and the life enhancing clown: towards a model of therapeutic clowning.

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In the last decade, there has been a rapid growth in the presence of clowns in hospitals, particularly in pediatric settings. The proliferation of clowns in health care settings has resulted in varying levels of professionalism and accountability. For this reason, there is a need to examine various forms of clowning, in particular therapeutic clowning in pediatric settings. The purpose of this article is to address what therapeutic clowning is and to describe the extent to which it can provide a complementary form of health care. In an attempt to apply theory to practice, the article will draw upon the experiences of a therapeutic clown within a pediatric setting while providing a historical and theoretical account of how clowns came to be in hospitals. Toward this end, a proposed model of therapeutic clowning will be offered which can be adapted for a variety of settings where children require specialized forms of play in order to enhance their coping, development and adjustment to life changes. Finally, current research on clowning in children's hospitals will be reviewed including a summary of findings from surveys administered at the Hospital for Sick Children.

PMCID: PMC2249744

PMID: 18317544 [PubMed]

21. Care Manag J. 2008;9(1):19-24.

Infinite possibility: clowning with elderly people.

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Over the past 30 years, there has been a plentitude of research into the health benefits of humor and laughter for healthy, sick, or depressed adults and children as well as for senior citizens. Medical research supports our human instinct that people who smile and laugh are happy, whereas those who are inexpressive are usually not happy. Research shows that humor stimulus results in mirth, which elicits a primarily emotional response with psychological effects, and laughter, which elicits a physical response with physiological effects. The many physiological benefits of laughter in older adults have been clearly demonstrated. Yet much of the medical research is based on experiments using funny videos and cartoons for humor sessions. I argue that "clowning around" with elderly people brings greater benefits than laughter alone. These benefits are clearly evident, though they may not be scientifically measurable: When the game is rooted in the patient's own imagination, thereby giving agency to a powerless individual it is many times more personal and transformative. In this article, I focus on my experiences with older adults while working with Clowns Without Borders and Risaterapia as well as on my own relationship with my grandfather. I provide a framework for why humanitarian clowning and the principles behind it can be incredibly well suited for working with the elderly.

PMID: 18402154 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]