

Picturing cancer survival

Young people's self portraits of the impact of cancer on growing up

Julie Mooney-Somers, *Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, University of Sydney*

Kris Smith, *School of Drama, Fine Art and Music, University of Newcastle*

The **Growing up with Cancer** study used multiple methods to explore the effects of a cancer diagnosis during adolescence on young people's developing identity, relationships, agency, and autonomy.

Nineteen young people (16 to 29 years) diagnosed with various cancers and haematological malignancies when aged 10 to 22 years, worked together with a digital media artist (Kris Smith) to **create a self portrait of themselves and their cancer journey**. Young people participated in one or more creative workshops and engaged with the artist via telephone, email and online live collaboration software. Some young people worked with Kris for several months.

This process presented an opportunity for young people to reflect on their experience of cancer and growing up.

Young people produced 21 self portraits using **mixed media, graphic, photographic, and musical techniques**.

The creative process and the resulting self-portraits are far more than simply research data. They stand alone as **pieces of art** to tell a **compelling story of the complex and contradictory nature of dealing with a life threatening illness during a time of significant flux, when identity formation is foreground**.

The artists:

J de Silva

Daniel Haslam

Khaled Haddad

Michon Collins

Jonathan Andreas

Super Sam

Danielle Tindle

Keira

Melia Jade

Sophie Cassar

Seb Graham

Lydia

Glenn Cotterell

James Henderson

Evie Bell

And four others

Contacts:

Julie.MooneySomers@sydney.edu.au

Kris.Smith@newcastle.edu.au