

Chapter 8

Your Future Journey

Hospital clowning is growing—in depth, training and impact around the world. Your future journey will build on work done by pioneering hospital clowns in recent years.

Growing Respect

Some noted therapeutic clown programs now are celebrating five and 10 years of service. Their years of professional service have generated greater acceptance of hospital clowning within the medical community.

Joan Barrington, Coordinator of the 10-year-old Therapeutic Clown Program at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ontario, Canada observes:



Joan as “Bunky”

“Therapeutic clowning at our hospital has become valued and respected by the health care team and parents alike.”

“We are under the umbrella of the Child Life Department, are part of the multi-disciplinary team, go to Rounds when possible, take notes on all our interventions, keep stats and are accountable in every way as permanent part-time staff.”

Korey Thompson, Artistic Director of Clowns for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, notes that, “now that we're in the fifth year of our program, we're more a part of the care giving team and that makes sense.”

Role for Trained Volunteers

“I see hospital clowns being more widely accepted,” agrees Joe “Doc Geezer” Barney, (*right*), who formerly clowned at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital and now travels the country teaching hospital clowning. He adds, “I see more of a future role for trained volunteer groups.”



Standards and Certification

In the United States, The Bumper "T" Caring Clowns are working with the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor and others to raise the bar on acceptable standards for hospital clowns and to develop a national certification procedure for hospital caring clowns.



In Canada, Joan Barrington is working with a team to develop a curriculum with standards and procedures for Canadian therapeutic clown apprentices. In 1999, Joan became Co-Director of Therapeutic Clowns Canada, a not-for-profit organization that assists pediatric health care facilities in starting their programs.

The Future of the Healing Arts

Shobhana "Shobi Dobi" Schwebke believes that in time, more in the health care community "will value the caring clown's presence as a key to setting an essential environment for healing."¹³

As medical practices evolve, new doors may open for the healing humor of hospital clowns. Ermyrn King, Coordinator of the Arts and Health Outreach Initiative at Penn State University observes that:

"The visionary Leland Kaiser speaks about the need for patients to have personal 'arts profiles' that will be factored into their healing regimen.

"Appropriate arts dosages including the art of healing humor, may be prescribed in a fashion hand-tailored to individual patients."

Ermyrn King adds that it is not difficult to *"imagine healing arts centers incorporated into or attached to hospitals, permitting even discharged patients to continue their arts involvements to help maintain wellness and prevent symptom recurrence."*

In the meantime, hospital clown training programs are multiplying. The internet is linking hospital clowns everywhere. Clown trips throughout the world are becoming popular. Your future journey into hospital clowning can take you as far as you're willing to travel.



Some Parting Thoughts

"Only a life lived for others is worthwhile"--Albert Einstein

You May Never Know

*"Accept the reality
that you may never know
—you may never know
who is benefiting
from your entertainment
or presence.*

*You may never know
what impact you provide.*

*You may never know
what happens to some
of the individuals
that you encounter.*

*Finally, you may never know,
at the time of an encounter,
how this moment
will change your life
and stay with you forever."*

— Richard Snowberg



Betty "Dr. I See You" Hodgson (left) and Peggy "Sunflower" Cole finish rounds in State College, PA

How Do I Keep My Heart Open?

"I sit before the mirror, pasting this red nose on my face. It has become such a part of me, a nose I trust to help me open the door to a sick little boy's heart. I wonder if I will have the sensitivity and skill that is required to "be there" with his pain.

"I know the answers are all in my heart, but how do I keep my heart open in the face of his suffering? How can I keep it together and not become unglued?

"I need some wisdom greater than that inside of me. I know that I can be a channel, a vessel, an instrument of love and peace. I know that God will help me, if I only ask. But what does God know about clowning?

"And then I remember, this isn't about being a clown. It's about letting the love of God pour through me, while I'm dressed as a clown. The costume and make-up will get the little boy's attention, but the real healing power will come through my ability to love and accept, to forgive and surrender. I know I must Let Go and Let God."¹⁴ —Patty Wooten