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ENGAGING heARTS: DEVELOPING AN ARTS-BASED CURRICULUM TO ENHANCE COMPASSION AND CREATIVITY IN HEALTHCARE

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In 2014-15 Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS), with supportive funding from the Ontario Arts Council, partnered with a local group of professional artists to develop a curriculum called Awakening Your Creative Power: a seminar series on creativity, compassion and play. In order to understand the feasibility and impact of this arts-based curriculum for healthcare personnel working within a hospital, HHS undertook a comprehensive program evaluation. Input from participants who attended the course was obtained in three ways: (1) weekly evaluation forms at the end of each session (2) a final evaluation that asked questions about the overall seminar series, and (3) a focus group discussion held 2 weeks after the seminar series ended.

This paper reports on the outcomes of the evaluation and the evolution of the curriculum over the past 3 years, including its impacts on both participants and the arts partners. The evaluation data demonstrate that the course was successful in meeting its stated objectives which include: enhancing interpersonal skills, fostering self-reflection, deepening compassion, cultivating resilience, recognizing creative potential,

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applying intention and coping with daily stresses through the power of play. In addition, the course also: increased self-awareness, fostered a sense of community, emphasized the value of creativity for its own sake, empowered participants, provided participants with a sense of accomplishment and made participants feel valued by the institution. The paper concludes with some reflections on the potential of engaging arts professionals in health professional education. ■