

Spotlight International COVID 19 News

New scientific research to reveal arts' healing power

In a groundbreaking series launching next year in Lancet, the World Health Organization and the Jameel Arts & Health Lab aim to provide rigorous evidence on how the arts can benefit our wellbeing

The collaboration, announced this week on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, builds on WHO's 2019 report highlighting ways that activities like dancing, music, drama, and visual arts can improve both mental and physical health across communities.

"For too long, science and the arts have been viewed as separate - but throughout history, they have often inspired each other," said WHO Chief Scientist Sir Jeremy Farrar at a Carnegie Hall event kicking off the project. "This series will show with rigor the scientific basis of how the arts can aid healing."

Published as a special series in The Lancet global health journal, the research will focus on noncommunicable diseases like cancer, diabetes, and lung disease - major global killers where creative interventions may help with treatment and prevention.

The partners aim to establish an evidence base and recommendations to embed arts-based social prescribing and cross-sector cooperation between health, education, social care, and the arts.

"During the pandemic, we saw balconies and windows filled with uplifting performances - reminding us that arts and culture are intrinsically linked to wellbeing," said WHO Arts & Health Lead Christopher Bailey.

"This series will view the benefits of creative expression not just through a medical lens but as important to attaining complete mental and physical health, as the WHO defines it."

Over 50 global researchers convened recently at NYU to start designing prospective cohort studies, randomized controlled

trials, and reviews over the next 18 months. Organizers hope the landmark research can help position artists as vital wellbeing partners alongside scientists.

Find out more: Here

Credit: UN Women/Ryan Brown