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Geriatric Medical Humanities – new section in European Geriatric Medicine journal

Despite broader currents of ageism within and without medicine, geriatricians, geropsychiatrists, gerontological nurses and allied health professionals are fortunate to be working with people at the richest stage of life, and in a speciality that is intellectually stimulating and professionally rewarding. However, our professional discourse does not always reflect the wonders of later life, and how our patients and their families manage and find vitality, warmth, humour and creativity despite multiple challenges.

One route to a better understanding is through the medical humanities, and in particular an emerging sub-section called cultural gerontology. A hallmark of later life is complexity and inter-individual variability, and great artists of all types are masters at portraying complexity through cinema, literature, music, poetry and other arts. Later life is no exception, and mature artists have even greater powers at transmitting these complicated but eventually positive messages about ageing .

As a body, geriatricians, geropsychiatrists, gerontological nurses and allied health professionals are used to writing and discussing throughout the length of our careers, are exposed to a broad range of cultural influences, and represent an ideal group to use this approach to a better understanding of the meaning and worth of ageing. Examples arise from early in the specialty from the broad vision of the pioneering geriatrician Robert N Butler and the vision of geropsychiatrist Gene Cohen of late life creativity arising not in spite of old age but because of it.

On the basis that there is likely to be an important and untapped reservoir of helpful insights by geriatricians and geropsychiatrists on how the arts and humanities illuminate the complexities of ageing, *European Geriatric Medicine* (the journal of the European Geriatric Medicine Society) has introduced a new section, Geriatric Medical Classics. This invites scholarly reflections of up to 1,000 words, and no more than 5 references, on the intersection between geriatric medicine and the medical humanities which provide insight into the nature and meaning of well-being, illness and experiences of the healthcare system in the context of ageing .

Focussing on a relevant cultural item – for example, from cinema, theatre, art or literature – these pieces should be written so as to attract the attention of the general readership of European

Geriatric Medicine : all contributions will be peer-reviewed.

We would welcome contributions from geriatricians, gerontological nurses and allied health professionals, and geropsychiatrists from around the world that would add to the richness of experience of the practice of specialist healthcare with older people, and illuminate the extraordinary possibilities of later life to a wider audience.

Prof Desmond (Des) O'Neill is Chair of the GSA Humanities and Arts Committee, and Section Editor for Geriatric Medical Classics in European Geriatric Medicine.