

History of The Therapeutic Clown Program at Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

2005

Program is formed with clown artist Jamie Burnett as solo therapeutic clown artist.

2007

Jamie's wish for a therapeutic clown partner is granted; Helen Donnelly joins him in the persona of 'Dr. Flap' and the duo clown program model is instituted.



2008

Helen and Jamie present at Arts in Health conference in U.S.

2007-2010

Helen and Jamie represent their program at the former CATC/ACCT conferences.

2010

Manuel Rodriguez is hired as an 'occasional clown' in the persona of 'Nurse Polo' to cover absences.



2010

Regular artistic supervision is established in the form of visiting experts who shadow and give feedback.

2010

Helen and Jamie participate in ground-breaking research: quantifiably measuring the positive impact therapeutic clowns have on nurses, and on children who have difficulty communicating. CTV and The Globe and Mail cover these findings.

2011

Helen Donnelly shares this research at the first international Therapeutic Clown conference in Israel.

2011

Jamie Burnett dies after a lengthy battle with cancer. Manuel Rodriguez is placed in primary partner role.

2012

Suzanne Roberts Smith is hired as the 'occasional' clown in order to retain the duo model, covering absences in the persona of 'Junior'.



2012

The program commits to regular monthly artistic development training as well as bimonthly reflective practice/professional supervision. Helen joins the Professional Advisory Committee and the program has equal status to any other profession within the hospital.

2013

Helen creates the program's first Standard of Care, 'Responsibilities of the Therapeutic Clown' and is passed by the PAC. Helen receives leadership training to support her role as program clown lead. Helen accepts an additional role: that of an Ethics Facilitator.

2014

Helen invites former members of CATC as well as international guests and interested parties to Holland Bloorview, hosting an international symposium including issues of training, research and funding. Former CATC/ACCT members gather to transition into the Canadian 'Therapeutic Clown Network'.

2014

The team begins to film episodes of a future television show to be offered to inpatients and beyond: 'TCTV' (Therapeutic Clown Television network).

2014

Helen is invited to Israel a second time, this time to train and collaborate with The Dream Doctors.

2015

The team hires a new primary therapeutic clown partner for Dr. Flap. Manuel Rodriguez joins Suzanne in 'occasional' clown status. A documentary film begins, showcasing the process of hiring and training a therapeutic clown.