

FROM STIGMA TO STRENGTH: HOW TO CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR STORYTELLING

Speakers/Facilitators:

Brooke Nolan¹, Conor Ashleigh², Community members TBC once registrations/abstract submissions are confirmed

¹International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users, ²Visual Storyteller at Conor Ashleigh

Brooke Nolan biography:

Brooke is the marketing manager at the International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users (INHSU) and a freelance journalist and storyteller. With a journalism degree and 15 years' experience in communications, Brooke is a firm believer in the power of stories to create change. Her work has been published in three books, and multiple digital and print magazines globally.

Conor Ashleigh biography:

Drawing on a background in community development and communications, Conor combines technical skills in photography, filmmaking and storytelling, with a strengths-based approach that empowers individuals, enables problem-solving and employs creative approaches evaluating project outcomes. He has worked in 40+ countries for international organisations including INHSU, the Red Cross, World Vision, UNICEF, the World Bank and World Health Organisation.

Community Members:

We will invite two or three community members to join the panel, decided based on the final registrations.

Background and objectives:

According to the London School of Business, when we hear statistics, we retain only five to 10% of what we're hearing, add an image and retention jumps to 25%. But when a story is used, retention jumps to a huge 70%.

In advocacy, stories are the most important tool that we have. They lower resistance to new ideas, spark curiosity, and encourage people to take positive action. They also have the power to illustrate complex social issues, challenging stereotypes and reducing stigma.

However, due to the amount of stigma and discrimination faced, for someone who uses drugs, telling their story is not easy.

This session aims to:

- Explore what it takes for someone who uses drugs to tell their story and what support others can give them
- To inspire other community members to use their stories for advocacy
- To educate organizations on how to appropriately support community members
- To explain how journalists, filmmakers, and writers can approach people's stories with compassion, empathy and support
- To showcase how the impact of storytelling for advocacy is not just the final stories, but the relationships built during the process of interviews, filming, and creating

Description of how the session will encourage debate and idea sharing:

The session will include a short five-minute presentation from each participant:

1. Brooke Nolan discussing lessons from the Storytelling for Advocacy program in Africa
2. Conor Ashleigh discussing lessons from the Connecting with Care project
3. Community members sharing their experiences of storytelling

It will then move to a panel format.

Facilitator Brooke Nolan have questions prepared, covering topics such as ethical considerations and informed consent, disclosing illegal activity, what makes a good story, retaining emotional wellbeing during the storytelling process, and the lasting impact of storytelling. The audience will be encouraged to ask questions and share their storytelling experiences.

Methods and format for promoting dialogue and networking:

Panel discussion and open dialogue with the audience.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

The conference collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.