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Voices from the heart: The use of digital storytelling in education

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Digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful teaching and learning tool, which presents personal narratives, images and music to create a unique and sometimes emotional snapshot into another person's experience. By offering a platform for sharing and understanding such narratives, professionals may gain insight into a perceived experience and construct their role accordingly. Used effectively, they can engage the listener and offer opportunity to reflect and consider the impact of their professional role on the storyteller. This article looks at how digital storytelling can enhance professional practice and enable vulnerable voices to be heard. While working as a medical volunteer with the international charity Operation Smile in Mexico in November 2011 the author was involved in assessing and caring for Mexican children with cleft lip and palates. Author's first experience of working in a multinational team of volunteers was challenging on many levels. Communication was key, so written and verbal information given to the patients was in their native language. The mission was televised and the patients' stories were used for educational and fund raising purposes. On reflection, the experience of being part of their stories was hugely influential and caused me to question my priorities and personal values. Digital storytelling facilitates the telling and hearing of some of the unwritten and unspoken stories of ordinary people, informing professionals to provide their care in a more informed and compassionate manner. This is a key part of our responsibility as professionals and colleagues; empowering and enabling our clients, working reflexively and collectively, and listening out for the hidden messages. It is our privilege to be part of another's story, to listen to their voices and enable them to be heard.

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