

Institution: University of Edinburgh		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: Seven Songs for a Long Life: Using Documentary Film as Palliative Care		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: June 2011 – October 2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Amy Hardie	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Head of Research, Scottish Documentary Institute Senior Lecturer Film and Television	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2003 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p><i>Seven Songs for a Long Life</i>, directed by Amy Hardie, is a feature-length documentary film that pioneers the use of creative activities in approaches to palliative care. It was screened to audiences in over 250 cinemas in 15 countries, and at 160 community-organised screenings in the UK from 2016-2020. Hardie's award-winning film challenges the notion that palliative care represents 'the beginning of the end.' It has benefited patients and their families by introducing music and song as means of support; influenced charities, the media and the general public by raising awareness of issues and experiences of palliative care; and has informed approaches to palliative care, education and training, including through the NHS.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>In 2011 Amy Hardie of the Scottish Documentary Institute (SDI) was approached by Strathcarron Hospice to become filmmaker in residence, based on her reputation for generating public engagement with healthcare through filmmaking. SDI is a hub for filmmakers based at Edinburgh College of Art with an international reputation for producing innovative documentaries and a commitment to supporting work that is socially aware and driven by emotional experience.</p> <p>Hardie began making <i>Seven Songs for a Long Life</i> [3.1] (henceforth <i>Seven Songs</i>) by working with families where one parent was not expected to live beyond six months. Working mainly with the children, she developed a series of film games incorporating filming and screening at home or in a hospice, which explored the potential of the camera as a channel of communication between family members, creating an intimate record of their shared experience. These led to a new creative collaboration with families and hospice staff to answer a fundamental research question: <i>How can we use film/music to enable us to take control of the last years or months of our lives, and make our inevitable deaths our own?</i> Hardie's approach to answering this question was based on principles of co-creation and innovative notions of the relationship between the documentary filmmaker, subject and audience. Workshops and screenings of rough cuts of footage involving participants and their families and carers were used throughout to inform next steps in filming and editing, leading to close, collaborative interactions.</p>		

This approach reflects the concept of 'expanded cinema', which rejects the one-way 'broadcast' relationship between the screen and its audience in favour of a more dialogical approach [3.2]. *Seven Songs* continues a previous line of Hardie's research into expanded cinema, developed during work on her first feature documentary *The Edge of Dreaming* [3.3]. In making *Seven Songs*, the power of visual storytelling and collaboration with subject and audience was explored throughout the production process, from background research and planning through to filming and editing.

The filmmaking process began in 2012 with family workshops, where the camera and resultant short films were used as a channel of communication within families, and between families and healthcare professionals at a time of acute stress. 50 short films were made for and by patients and staff during Hardie's residency. Some of these became music films as patients chose to sing rather than talk to the camera; the resulting feature-length film *Seven Songs* [3.1] ultimately took the form of a 'documentary in song.' Supported by a musically trained staff nurse, Hardie worked with patients to tell their stories in song. Song choices were made by patients, and Hardie brought in a professional singing coach to give patients the confidence to achieve their 'best voice', which would remain after their death as a legacy to future generations. Rough cuts of *Seven Songs* were screened in the hospice, with formal and informal discussions providing feedback to the filmmaker. Making the film was thus an explorative, co-created process, with the filmmaker adapting her approach according to patient and staff feedback. The making of *Seven Songs* was supported by GBP305,000 in external funding [3.1].

3. References to the research

3.1 A. Hardie. *Seven Songs for a Long Life*, 2015. URL: <https://www.sevensongsfilm.com/>. Funding sources: The Bertha Foundation, the Public Broadcasting Service in the US, Britdoc, Scottish Screen, Awards for All and The Funding Network in the UK. Total funding raised: GBP303k. (Submitted in REF2)

3.2 A. Hardie. Movie-Making as Palliative Care. In *On the Feminist Philosophy of Gillian Howie: Materialism and Mortality*, V. Browne and D. Whistler eds., Bloomsbury Academic, New York, 2016. (Can be supplied by HEI on request) <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474254151.ch-013>

3.3 A. Hardie. *The Edge of Dreaming*, 75 minutes, 2011. Documentary film, funded by Creative Scotland, Channel 4 and VPRO and Arte. <http://www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk/> (Submitted to REF2014 in REF2)

4. Details of the impact

The making of *Seven Songs* provided palliative relief to the project's participants. The film itself has raised public awareness and changed perceptions of palliative care, and informed the work of hospices, charities, and healthcare education and practice. This was achieved through cinema screenings locally and nationally as well as a post-screening workshop which encouraged discussion of end-of-life among patients, their families and the general public. As a senior staff member at the University of Edinburgh Medical School puts it: "*this film is something different. It helps talk about uncertainty which actually most doctors and nurses are much less trained for.*" [5.1]

Palliative relief for patients

Statements from Strathcarron Hospice patients and staff testify that Hardie's approach to filming led to palliative relief. Participants praised the project as "*absolutely amazing*", "*very relaxing*", "*something to look forward to*", "*good fun*" and a "*marvellous, marvellous comforter*" for relatives. Patients also noted the sense of acceptance that came from seeing themselves on film:

"I didn't really see myself like that until I saw it on the film... And I think in a way I thought it was quite good because I thought, well, it's like an acceptance." [5.2]

The project created a collaborative legacy for families, capturing elements of everyday life as well as special moments the families chose to record:

"My family... they really liked it. I think secretly they know that they can still have Mum on it when I'm not here, so it'll be good." [5.2]

The Palliative Care Research Network newsletter (February 2016) reported that Strathcarron patients valued the opportunity *"to tell their personal story, to be seen as strong individuals ... and not just weak and vulnerable patients."* [5.3]

Raising public awareness and changing perceptions of palliative care

Seven Songs was screened to audiences in over 250 cinemas in 15 countries, and at 160 community-organised screenings in the UK. It has been invited to over 40 international film festivals and conferences and was nominated for five awards in 2016, including Best Single Documentary at the Scottish BAFTAs [5.4]. It had a higher than average (9%) audience share for its UK transmission on BBC Two Scotland, with a terrestrial audience of 101,000 in Scotland [5.5] and screened on the national US public television network PBS 1,401 times up to November 2017 [5.6], accompanied by a dedicated website which included downloadable educational resources. In May 2016, the film was screened at 14 events with accompanying workshops around the UK as part of Dying Matters Awareness Week [5.6].

There was extensive coverage of the film in the press in the UK and overseas – including four-star reviews in *The Guardian* newspaper and *Total Film* magazine, and a recommendation as one of the best films of the year in *Vulturehound* magazine [5.7] – demonstrating the positive reception the film received. A dedicated campaign on social media [5.5] for the film's premiere in September-October 2015 generated 6,249 views of the film's trailer and accompanying videos on YouTube; 144,700 impressions on Twitter; and Facebook posts which regularly reached over 4,000 people. *Seven Songs* was included in highlight features for the SXSW 2016 line-up in press including *IndieWire* and *Variety* magazine, and REM posted about the film's PBS transmission on their Facebook page, which has around 4.4 million likes: *"an awesome documentary... A special shout out goes to Mandy, the nurse who sang the duet of 'Everybody Hurts'"* [5.7].

Post-screening evaluations undertaken by Hardie in conjunction with UoE's Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP) showed how the film changed public perceptions about planning for end-of-life and palliative care: 86% of those surveyed at screenings of the film came to the realisation that hospice care can be part of life, and 96% stated that they would recommend *Seven Songs* as a resource for helping others approach a terminal diagnosis [5.8].

Enhancing the profile of the work of hospices and palliative care charities

44 screenings in hospices around the UK (including in partnership with Hospice UK for Hospice Care Week 2015) were each accompanied by workshops exploring ideas around end-of-life and training resources [5.6]. Some of the Strathcarron patients who feature in *Seven Songs* took part in a roadshow of Q&A sessions alongside these screenings, reflecting on the experience of filming, the idea of leaving a legacy and of accepting change.

Partnerships were formed with 11 UK and 13 international palliative care charities, through which the film was offered as a tool to facilitate dialogue around end-of-life within their networks and with the wider public through screenings and events. These engagement opportunities contributed to raising the profile of these charities and the services they provide. Hospice UK confirmed that:

“This film tells the story of joy and honesty even in the face of serious illness and impending death. It shows the power of attentive and flexible hospice care to help people reconnect to what matters in their life – whether it is music, memories, families or simple everyday things. The power of patients bursting into their favourite song is startling and the film captures these poignant moments unselfconsciously and tenderly” [5.9].

Informing healthcare education and practice

In line with the Scottish Government’s Strategic Framework for Action on Palliative and End of Life Care, medical professionals and educators have used the film to encourage discussions around end of life. Healthcare Improvement Scotland notes that:

“Giving health and care professionals and members of the public access to the stories of real people as portrayed powerfully in ‘Seven Songs for a Long Life’ enables people to have greater understanding about the benefits of Anticipatory Care Planning which is essentially about individuals and those who are supporting them thinking ahead.” [5.10]

The film can be used within the NHS as part of nursing continuing professional development (CPD) and revalidation [5.11]. The Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland identified the importance of *Seven Songs* in the relationship that nursing staff build with patients:

“For me as a nurse, this is a really powerful film. Being alongside people and their families at the end of their lives and sharing that journey is the most incredible privilege... Being present as a fellow human being, as a companion, sharing the moments of joy and the pain. That is the essence of nursing and ‘Seven Songs for a Long Life’ portrays this with tenderness and sensitivity.” [5.11]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Statement from The Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh

5.2 Quotes from patients at Strathcarron Hospice

5.3 Palliative Care Research Network newsletter, February 2016

5.4 Film festival screenings and award nominations

5.5 Media campaign delivery report for *Seven Songs*, including BBC Scotland transmission details

5.6 Collated screenings of *Seven Songs*

5.7 Collated press and media for *Seven Songs*

5.8 Evaluation by *The Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP)*

5.9 Statement from Hospice Care UK

5.10 Statement from Anticipatory Care Planning, Healthcare Improvement Scotland

5.11 Instructions on how to use *Seven Songs* as part of the Nursing and Midwifery Council revalidation requirement and testimonial from Chief Executive and Nurse Director, The Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland