**‘Hand in Hand’: Some Thoughts on Storytelling, Health and Dealing with a Post-Truth World**

*Michael Wilson*

*Loughborough University*

Over the past decade or so storytelling has found itself increasingly an ‘in-demand’ partner in a growing cross-disciplinary research environment and the bringing together of storytelling with healthcare and medical sciences has been an area where these collaborations have particularly thrived. Storytelling, so the argument goes, brings experiential and vernacular knowledge to a field that is dominated by the scientific knowledge of the expert and the professional, thereby enriching it. It brings to the table a different way of thinking about and knowing the world and our relationships within it. Storytelling allows us to navigate our way through a complex, contradictory and ever-changing world. Rather than accepting a single truth or reality, storytelling embraces the idea of multiple truths and unstable realities. Storytelling does not replace scientific knowledge, but adds to it. It factors *homo narrens* into our knowledge base and perhaps explains why people often act in contradiction to scientific truth and expert opinion. Storytelling and Health make excellent bedfellows.

However, in the past twelve months we have seen extraordinary events: referenda and elections on both sides of the Atlantic have seen experts of all disciplines derided; bare-faced lies and audacious untruths have been brazenly peddled, and even when found out, they are simply repeated more loudly and more brazenly than before, as if the more a lie is repeated, the more true it becomes.

Electorates have voted against the facts and with their feelings, we are told. We have fake news. We are in a post-truth age. Suddenly the idea of multiple, equally valid truths seems a little less attractive, after all, and one is left wondering about the extent to which storytelling has been inadvertently complicit in creating and validating not a multi-truth world, but a post-truth one.

Yet storytelling has other functions. Storytelling, deployed wisely, allows us to process information and emotions, to discriminate between truth and lies and, critically, to hear dissenting voices, the voices that are seldom heard above the megaphones of the powerful.

Is it time for storytelling to reassess its place within the world of cross-disciplinary research and re-evaluate the contribution it can make to the pursuit of truth (or truths) in a post-truth world?