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Art Therapy: A Scientific Review

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ABSTRACT

Art therapy is a creative method of expression used as a therapeutic technique. Art therapy originated in the field of art and psychotherapy and may vary in definition. The British artist Adrian Hill coined the term art therapy in 1942. Adamson, the father of art therapy in Britain, art therapy and outside art. Paediatric trauma patient's impairment of depression and locus of controlling person in mates. The purpose of art therapy is essentially one of healing general illness, cancer, diagnosis, bereaved children and in carceviton. Dyslexia is a widely held opinion that dyslexia associated with remarkably artistic creativity.

Keywords: art therapy, trauma, dyslexia, depression, paediatrics, bereaved children

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1. Introduction

Art therapy (also known as arts therapy) is a creative method of expression used as a therapeutic technique. Art therapy originated in the fields of art and psychotherapy and may vary in definition. Art therapy may focus on the creative art-making process itself, as therapy, or on the analysis of expression gained through an

exchange of patient and therapist interaction. The psychoanalytic approach was one of the earliest forms of art psychotherapy. The therapist interprets the client's symbolic self-expression as communicated in the art and elicits interpretations from the client. Analysis of transference is no longer always a component. It is based on the belief that

the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight. Art therapy integrates the fields of human development, visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms), and the creative process with models of counselling and psychotherapy.

History:

The British artist Adrian Hill coined the term *art therapy* in 1942. Hill, recovering from tuberculosis in a sanatorium, discovered the therapeutic benefits of drawing and painting while convalescing. He wrote that the value of art therapy lay in "completely engrossing the mind (as well as the fingers)...releasing the creative energy of the frequently inhibited patient", which enabled the patient to "build up a strong defence against his misfortunes". He suggested artistic work to his fellow patients. That began his art therapy work, which was documented in 1945 in his book, *Art Versus Illness*. The artist Edward Adamson, demobilised after WW2, joined Adrian Hill to extend Hill's work to the British long stay mental hospitals. Other early proponents of art therapy in Britain include E. M. Lyddiatt, Michael Edwards, Diana Raphael-Halliday and Rita Simon. National professional associations of art therapy exist in many countries, including Brazil, Canada, Finland, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania, South Korea, and Sweden. International networking contributes to the establishment of standards for education and practice. diverse perspectives exist on history of art therapy, which complement those that focus on the institutionalization of art therapy as a profession in Britain and the United States.

2. Applications

As a mental health profession, art therapy is employed in many clinical and other settings with diverse populations. Art therapy can also be found in non-clinical settings, as well as in art studios and in creativity development workshops. Closely related in practice to marriage and family therapists and mental health counsellors, using their evaluative and psychotherapy skills, art therapists choose materials and interventions appropriate to their clients' needs and design sessions to achieve therapeutic goals and objectives. They use the creative process to help their clients increase insight, cope with stress, work through traumatic experiences, increase cognitive, memory and neurosensory abilities, improve interpersonal relationships and achieve greater self-fulfilment. Many art therapists draw upon images from resources such as ARAS (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism) to incorporate historical art and symbols into their work with patients.

Paediatric trauma patients

The efficiency of treatment interventions for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children have not been researched extensively. Linda Chapman and fellow psychologists have, however, researched the effectiveness of art therapy on paediatric trauma patients. Early in the research, analysis showed that there were no significant reductions in PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms between the

patients and the control group. However, acute stress disorder symptoms were reduced for the children who received the art therapy intervention.

Another use that is becoming more prevalent is aiding in the recovery of eating disorders. There are a few reasons why this type of treatment is helpful when treating eating disorders. One reason is the ease of communicating deep issues non-verbally. In many cases people use food restriction as a way to gain control and divert attention from a much deeper problem in their lives. These deeper issues are in most cases so hard to deal with that the use of art, pictures, and movement can provide needed insight. The way this works is through the interpretation of the things that the patient has drawn. There are many things to look for when interpreting art work. Not only do you look at what is on the paper and the symbolism in that, attention also needs to be paid what is not there, the things that people omit from a work can be just as informative. The placement of each part of the art work will provide insight. Art therapy also allows the individual to play a vital role in recovery as well as track their progress. A third reason is that it helps to build a more aware and healthy relationship with the individual's body. One major way art therapy helps with this is through a technique called Body image tracing. Body image tracing is where a patients compare the outline of how they perceive their body to a true outline of their body. Because of these reasons art therapy has been a useful and quite successful tool in many venues, including out and in-patient treatment facilities, hospitals, schools, and private practices.

Improvement of depression and locus of control in prison inmates: A 2009 study of prison inmates done by David Gussak discovered that art therapy aided in the improvement of mood within prison inmates. It is believed that prison inmates experience an external locus of control and as such feel they do not control their lives and subsequently experience a higher instance of depression, overall poor mood. Art therapy however was proven by David Gussak to assist inmates to shift their locus of control from an external to internal and thus allow inmates to feel they had some control over themselves. This feeling of control led to improvement of mood and the associated depression within the inmate population.

Purpose

The purpose of art therapy is essentially one of healing. Art therapy can be successfully applied to clients with physical, mental or emotional problems, diseases and disorders. Any type of visual art and art medium can be employed within the therapeutic process, including painting, drawing, sculpting, photography, and digital art. Art therapy stands in contrast with other kinds of creative or expressive arts therapies that use dance, music or drama. One of the major differences between art therapy and other forms of communication is that most other forms of communication elicit the use of words or language as a means of communication. Studies have demonstrated the efficacy of art therapy, as applied to clients with memory loss due to Alzheimer's and other diseases; stroke residuals; cognitive functioning; traumatic brain injury; post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD); depression; dealing with chronic illness; and aging Connections.

Uses:

General illness

People always search for some escape from illness and it has been found that art is one of the more common methods. Art and the creative process can aid many illnesses (cancer, heart disease, influenza, etc.). People can escape the emotional effects of illness through art making and many creative methods. Hospitals have started studying the influence of arts on patient care and found that participants in art programs have better vitals and fewer complications sleeping. Artistic influence doesn't need to be participation in a program, but studies have found that a landscape picture in a hospital room had reduced need for narcotic pain killers and less time in recovery at the hospital. Art therapy has been shown to help students ages 11 to 18 with autism spectrum disorder to increase their social skills. There was improvement in assertion scores, and hyperactivity scores and internalizing behaviour (harming oneself) significantly decreased with art therapy sessions.

Research has also indicated that art therapy can increase a child's willingness to participate in therapy and can be an effective component to social skills training (Epp, 2008). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that art therapy can offer an outlet for a child with autism to express his or her feelings and thoughts without resorting to tantrums when communication proves too frustrating. Certain methods in art therapy, such as using comic strips, have been shown to be an effective way to teach communication skills by encouraging discussion and analysis (Epp, 2008). Results of a study by Epps (2008), which focused on merging different forms of art therapy with group therapy for treating autism, showed that social skills and problem behaviour both demonstrated improvement when art therapy was employed in a group setting.

3. Cancer diagnosis

Art therapists have conducted studies to understand why some cancer patients turned to art making as a coping mechanism and a tool to creating a positive identity outside of being a cancer patient. Women in the study participated in different art programs ranging from pottery and card making to drawing and painting. The programs helped them regain an identity outside of having cancer, lessened emotional pain of their on-going fight with cancer, and also giving them hope for the future. Studies have also shown how the emotional distress of cancer patients has been reduced when utilizing the creative process. The women made drawings of themselves throughout the treatment process while also doing yoga and meditating; these actions combined helped to alleviate some symptoms. A review of 12 studies investigating the use of art therapy in cancer patients by Wood, Molassiotis, and Payne (2010) investigated the symptoms of emotional, social, physical, global functioning, and spiritual controls of cancer patients. They found that art therapy can improve the process of psychological readjustment to the change, loss, and

uncertainty associated with surviving cancer. It was also suggested that art therapy can provide a sense of "meaning-making" because of the physical act of creating the art. When given five individual sessions of art therapy once per week, art therapy was shown to be useful for personal empowerment by helping the cancer patients understand their own boundaries in relation to the needs of other people. In turn, those who had art therapy treatment felt more connected to others and found social interaction more enjoyable than individuals who did not receive art therapy treatment. Furthermore, art therapy improved motivation levels, abilities to discuss emotional and physical health, general well-being, and increased global quality of life in cancer patients.

Disaster relief

Art therapy has been used in a variety of traumatic experiences, including disaster relief and crisis intervention. Art therapists have worked with children, adolescents and adults after natural and manmade disasters, encouraging them to make art in response to their experiences. Some suggested strategies for working with victims of disaster include: assessing for distress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), normalizing feelings, modelling coping skills, promoting relaxation skills, establishing a social support network, and increasing a sense of security and stability.

Bereaved children

Art therapy and other creative, humanistic intervention strategies are becoming popular methods for working with life-threatened patient and for working with the family members of patients who die- particularly bereaved children. Art therapy stimulates the conscious and unconscious expression of the mourning process in adult and child patients. Children are at greater psychological risk because their grief is less overt and can occur months or even years after the death. Group therapy is used to provide social sanction for the expression of that grief and to promote adaptive mourning responses.

Incarceration

Art therapy may be a beneficial treatment for incarcerated women. A residential substance abuse program called New Beginnings in a detention facility has used art therapy as a means of treatment for incarcerated women. The therapy sessions were weekly and lasted 2 hours. During the first 15 minutes of the art therapy session, the topic of therapy was discussed. The topics were self-esteem, fear, self-defeating behaviours, treatment goals, barriers for recovery, and self-sabotage. The clients then worked on an exercise relating to the topic for 45 minutes in tables of four. Exploring deeper thoughts, positive reinforcement and feedback, confidence building, and clarification of thinking were encouraged by the art therapist. The clients were resistant at first, claiming "I can't draw." However, they began to share their works and offer insight on other inmates' work after one or two sessions. Group cohesion increased after the inmates began expressing different perspectives on their work and others. Simple art media was offered, to ensure that the clean-up process and technique of the materials was not difficult or intimidating. Art therapy in the program was used to help clients recognize their defines mechanisms that conceal

their fear of inadequacy or to create a sense of safety and peace, increase confidence, express feelings verbally, and identify feelings. Therefore, art therapy can be used as a tool in incarceration settings with women for mental health and substance abuse. In a case study by Hongo, the research suggests the beneficial nature of group art therapy in a prison context. The population was observed and interviewed through a session, with positive results noted throughout. The conclusions suggested that it has positive effect on group dynamic and morale, as well as therapeutic benefits. An interesting perspective made by the researchers was the cost effective nature of group therapy. Using this model allows for maximum therapeutic value made with minimal resources available.

4. Distraction

Distraction from sadness using art therapy may be a better alternative than venting sadness. Two studies by Drake and Winner (2012) published from the American Psychological Association compared venting (expressing negative feelings) and distraction (expressing something that is not related to negative feelings) in one study. To distract oneself, the participants were told to draw something unrelated to a sad film they had watched. The participants who had vented were told to draw something related to the film. In study 2, the participants were told to think of a sad event and were put into the venting, distraction, and calming position or sitting conditions. The sitting condition allowed the passage of time to be evaluated. In study 1, the distraction method in which the participants drew something unrelated to the sad film significantly improved negative mood compared to the venting condition. In study 2, the distraction method in which the participants drew a house (something unrelated to the sad event), had significantly improved negative mood compared to venting (drawing the sad event) or the sitting condition (sat quietly for 10 minutes). Therefore, art therapy could be beneficial to people suffering from depressive moods through a way of distraction rather than venting. Art therapy has also been used to develop problem resolution and emotional regulation skills in children.

As an approach to problem solving

Congdon (1990) discusses art therapy's benefits in terms outside the traditional approaches within the clinical world of therapists purporting that art therapy should be used not just to help treat mental illness but as a tool to help individuals solve problems in day to day living.

Dyslexia and art therapy

"It is a widely held opinion that dyslexia is associated with remarkably artistic creativity. This leads to us to look at art schools to see if there are high numbers of people who have dyslexia. The answer is yes, there is an unusually high correlation between people with dyslexia and art students. The question should be why? There are speculations that dyslexics have differing brain structures and functions. There tends to be a lack of objective studies that confirm the art and dyslexia relationship. The Wolff and Lundberg article implies that it isn't that easy to get into art school; that people with dyslexia earn their entrance into the art schools on artistic merit, as an easy way out of conventional

academics. Corlu, Özcan, and Korkmazlar suggest that further research is a valid research concern. There are studies that seemingly coincide with the concept that people with dyslexia see the world differently. There seems to be evidence that dyslexics have a superior level of visuospatial skill. Gross and Bornstein think that dyslexia might be due to a difficulty in treating mirror images as the same stimulus, when taking into consideration words that are commonly switched, such as god and dog, no and on, and saw and was.

In a study done by Rankin, Riley, & Davier they found that there is a pattern in drawings that can positively identify people with dyslexia. Rees thinks that art is a very helpful tool for people with learning disabilities, by supporting and validating their emotional and mental health. English higher educational institutions are currently implementing art therapies for disabilities provisions. Art is being recognized as a valid course of action for helping people with dyslexia. There is a group of people who believe that even if dyslexics have poor drawing skills, they are still found in art programs.

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