

Art Therapy In Palliative Care: Cancer Patients

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Abstract

In order to enhance the efficacy of art therapy sessions, this study looked at whether visual beauty and the joy that comes from creative endeavours might help alleviate symptoms experienced by palliative care patients. Method: Before and after a one-hour art therapy session, patients performed a self-assessment of six symptoms (pain, anxiety, illness, weariness, sorrow, and depression) that was modified from the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS). After the session, a self-evaluation of aesthetic feeling was used to complete this assessment. Next, a correlation analysis was carried out. Our results support the efficacy of art therapy in easing pain in the palliative setting. We offer ideas as well for the future development and enhancement of these meetings.

Keywords : art therapy ,palliative , cancer

Introduction

A growing number of cancer patients turn to alternative therapies to enhance their quality of life (Horneber et al., 2012; Klafke et al., 2012). The definition of art therapy is "the exploitation of a person's artistic potential with a humanitarian and therapeutic objective" (Forestier, 2009). It encompasses the traits of the patient as well as the emotional and physical aspects of their suffering. This is one of the explanations for why this kind of therapy has been used more often during the past 20 years (Wood et al., 2011; Geue et al., 2010).

With the goal of enhancing well-being and psychological functioning, art therapy is a professional intervention that makes use of the expressive elements of art-making. 1 Making art enables for the communication of issues and emotions that would be difficult to articulate verbally in other contexts. There is proof that art therapy works to lessen the typical symptoms cancer patients experience. 4 But because there are so many different aspects to art therapy, it's a complicated intervention, and evaluating it may be difficult.

Recent research have demonstrated that individuals undergoing personal growth may have less self-consciousness and more pressure tolerance when receiving art therapy (McIntyre, 1992; Hawkins, 1993). Some of them even discovered that participating in art appreciation and producing artwork might make a person's life more meaningful and active (Frampton, 1986; Kennett, 2000). Fine art is a compilation of memories and experiences; art is mental pictures that are firmly ingrained. According to psychology, the substance of pictures represents the individuals' bio-psycho-spiritual aspect when art is created. Images not only help individuals recall prior events, but also help them do so vividly.

Patients are increasingly turning to complementary and alternative therapies in search of comfort, which reflects the growing demand for a more thorough approach to managing these cancer-related symptoms. According to several studies, more than 80% of cancer patients may combine complementary therapies with other conventional medical procedures including surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. 11 It has been discovered that a

variety of complementary treatments, including meditation, massage, hypnosis, and music therapy, are efficient in easing symptoms, raising quality of life, and enhancing cancer patients' capacity to handle stress.

Cancer patients have benefited from art therapy at various stages of the disease and with a range of therapies. Art therapy has been proven to be beneficial for cancer patients following treatment (Luzzatto et al., 2003), patients undergoing a bone marrow transplant in isolation (Gabriel et al., 2001), patients receiving radiotherapy (Oster et al., 2006), and patients receiving chemotherapy (Forzoni et al., 2010). Patients with terminal cancer getting hospice and palliative care may have had their physical suffering adequately managed, but they also had to deal with a variety of life's obstacles; they require mental and spiritual care as well since they encounter a variety of stressors (Ferrell, 2005). By learning from Western cultures, we know that art therapy can boost the therapeutic benefits of symptom control by giving patients' end-of-life greater meaning through visual or performing arts (such as music, dance, painting, or theatre) (McIntyre, 1992; Hawkins, 1993; Mayo, 1996; Kennett, 2000; Michele, 2004). For some years, art therapy has been created in hospice care facilities to lessen the emotional strain on grieving children or families (McIntyre, 1992; Hawkins, 1993; Kaye, 1997).

Review of Literature

Newland, P., & Bettencourt, B. A. (2020). Effectiveness of mindfulness-based art therapy for symptoms of anxiety, depression, and fatigue: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 41, 101246.

One of the alternative therapies being utilised to treat cancer symptoms is art therapy. The idea behind art therapy is that the creative process that goes into creating art is therapeutic and life-improving.

It is used to assist patients or their family in becoming more self-aware, managing symptoms, and adjusting to traumatic and stressful circumstances.

Cohen-Yatziv, L., & Regev, D. (2019). The effectiveness and contribution of art therapy work with children in 2018-what progress has been made so far? A systematic review. *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 24(3), 100-112.

The goals of art therapy are to help a person become aware of and express their most profound feelings via the artistic process.

A increasing amount of research is showing that art therapy can be successful in reducing cancer-related symptoms in both children and adults.

Hertrampf, R. S., & Wärja, M. (2017). The effect of creative arts therapy and arts medicine on psychological outcomes in women with breast or gynecological cancer: A systematic review of arts-based interventions. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 56, 93-110.

One of the first and most thorough programmes that showed how art therapy might be helpful in an oncology context by aiding patients in reinforcing healthy coping behaviours and boosting their self-esteem and sense of control was called Art that Heals.

One-on-one contacts, support groups, and community engagement in art displays including works made by cancer survivors are just a few of the current art interventions available to cancer patients.

Additionally, the majority of recent research assessed the effectiveness of art therapy. Additionally, the majority of recent research assessed the effectiveness of art therapy.

ALLIATIVE, P. (2012). Art therapy among palliative care inpatients with advanced cancer. *Palliative medicine*, 27(6), 571-572.

The goal of art therapy is to enhance psychological functioning and well-being by utilising the expressive aspects of producing art. Making art enables for the expression of worries and emotions that would otherwise be difficult to verbalise through the creative process. Evidence supporting the effectiveness of art therapy in easing common

symptoms reported by cancer patients has been established. But because there are so many different elements involved in art therapy, it can be difficult to evaluate.

Radl, D., Vita, M., Gerber, N., Gracely, E. J., & Bradt, J. (2018). The effects of Self-Book© art therapy on cancer-related distress in female cancer patients during active treatment: A randomized controlled trial. *Psycho-Oncology*, 27(9), 2087-2095.

Art therapy is one sort of psychosocial intervention that falls under the umbrella of psycho-oncology, which helps cancer patients deal with their illness and its implications.

Many oncological medical-rehabilitative facilities have incorporated art therapy based on painting or sketching during the past 20 years.

Augsburger, A., Neri, C., Bodenmann, P., Gravier, B., Jaquier, V., & Clair, C. (2022). Assessing incarcerated women's physical and mental health status and needs in a Swiss prison: a cross-sectional study. *Health & Justice*, 10(1), 1-16.

A cancer inpatient unit received an art therapy intervention by Ferzst et al. in 2018. With the assistance of an art teacher, patients produced their own works of art in a single session using a variety of mediums.

For isolated bone marrow transplant patients, Gabriel et al.¹⁹ employed a group treatment programme called "The creative journey" created by Luzzatto and Gabriel²⁰.

Lin, M. H., Moh, S. L., Kuo, Y. C., Wu, P. Y., Lin, C. L., Tsai, M. H., ... & Hwang, S. J. (2012). Art therapy for terminal cancer patients in a hospice palliative care unit in Taiwan. *Palliative & supportive care*, 10(1), 51-57.

Recent research have demonstrated that individuals undergoing personal growth may have less self-consciousness and more pressure tolerance when receiving art therapy (McIntyre, 1992; Hawkins, 1993). Some of them even discovered that participating in art appreciation and producing artwork might make a person's life more meaningful and active (Frampton, 1986; Kennett, 2000). Fine art is a compilation of memories and experiences; art is mental pictures that are firmly ingrained. According to psychology, the substance of pictures represents the individuals' bio-psycho-spiritual aspect when art is created. Images not only help individuals recall prior events, but also help them do so vividly.

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Methodology

Participants:

Over the course of 18 months, the patients were gradually brought in from an acute palliative care unit. The investigation covered a total of 30 patients and art therapy sessions.

Method:

The Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS) is a self-evaluation tool that enables patients to record the severity of nine frequently occurring symptoms (pain, nausea, fatigue, drowsiness, loss of appetite, dyspnea, depression, anxiety, and feelings of ill-being) using a visual scale ranging from 0 (no symptom) to 10 (extreme symptom) (worst symptom). The ESAS has demonstrated strong test-retest reliability when used by cancer patients (Bruera et al., 1991; 1989; Chang et al., 2000; Richardson & Jones, 2009).

At least one session led by a licenced art therapist was attended by the patients. Each patient was given the opportunity to select his or her favourite artistic medium a few days before to the event. The patient's choices and physical capacity to create something important for them dictated the technique and topic to be used. They used a variety of artistic mediums, including painting, drawing, photography, modelling, and sculpture.

Objectives:

Our study's goals were to explore the viability of using mixed methodologies to quantify the short-term effects of art therapy on symptoms often encountered by patients with advanced cancer and qualitatively gauge how much of an influence and value the session had on their emotional and physical suffering.

Sample:

A sample of 30 people who meet the criteria were included for this study.

Inclusion Criteria:

An ability to take part in an hour-long art therapy session.

The ability to complete all the self-assessments.

Procedure:

The therapists first observed the daily group sessions at the hospice ward, the weekly conference of the hospice organising team, and spoke with patients to better understand the complete requirements of each patient. The evaluation of the patient's total requirements and creative expression was overseen by art therapists. The patients were questioned by art therapists using the following questions: "Are you a regular painter?" Are aesthetics (a feeling of beauty and appearance) important to you? Art therapists also assessed the patient's ability to articulate joyful memories in a clear and concise manner. The therapist worked one-on-one with each patient to encourage sharing; if required, the patient's family member or primary caregiver might help. The therapist documented the procedure with the patient's and their family's consent.

Discussion

The goal of hospice palliative care is to provide the highest possible standard of care for dying patients who do not respond to curative therapy (Kennett, 2000). Patients with terminal cancer frequently struggle with physical, mental, social, and spiritual issues. The majority of terminal cancer patients still face significant challenges in life when they learn about the disease and the treatment options. They also often experience depression and lose control of their emotions when told that they are approaching the terminal stages due to the pressure and fear of facing death. These individuals absolutely require mental and spiritual treatment. The use of visual art appreciation in art therapy as a way to express aesthetic sentiments and as a form of nonverbal communication may inspire patients to produce art and improve their quality of life. One form of psycho-spiritual treatment for patients is the sharing of artwork and life experiences, which can boost patients' confidence (Kaye, 1997; Michele, 2004).

The therapist assisted the patient in exploring and coming to terms with life's purpose by bringing up their fond recollections. The patient was more at ease and had stable emotions since memories allowed them to reveal suppressed feelings. The more clearly the patients could articulate themselves during the therapeutic process, the more specific the subject matter that could be discovered in their artworks (McIntyre, 1992; Hawkins, 1993). After the visual art appreciation or meditation, all patients were encouraged to freely practise painting or make artwork. Patients most frequently picked landscape as their painting's theme and for art enjoyment. Nature, the mountains, or the water were prevalent themes in a lot of the artwork. Many people in Taiwan like nature, and connecting with it helps them find balance and a sense of serenity. The subjects that patients choose to draw from were frequently influenced by leisure topics, pictures, and images from the art sector. Anxiety was lessened by the encounter. The majority of patients used their enjoyment of art and their own artwork to identify their own physical, emotional, and social needs. Following the art appreciation, patients' aesthetic experiences were conveyed in a variety of ways, including sense of beauty, admiration, inventiveness, hands-on artwork, and regular

participation in creative artwork. In several instances, patients who appreciated art before starting to paint did so. Many of the artworks were moving. We discovered that most patients articulated their aesthetic experiences more specifically and felt more motivated after receiving art therapy. Our findings demonstrated that individuals with lower educational levels and those who had never painted before improved their artistic expression more than those with better educational backgrounds. These may be the case because the former valued the chance to appreciate painting and visual art, something they had not previously.

Patients with terminal cancer who experienced various physical and psychological stressors frequently developed depression (Ferrell, 2005). We discovered that patients transitioned from being passive to actively producing artwork throughout the course of the art therapy. Many of them chose their favourite photos for the art appreciation assignment, then they practised sketching. These patients overcame physical discomfort, such as pain, and turned it into imaginative artwork (McIntyre, 1992; Hawkins, 1993; Mayo, 1996; Kaye, 1997; Kennett, 2000; Michele, 2004). We could clearly perceive the patients' spirits from the description of the artwork they produced. The majority of our patients were really concentrated throughout the art appreciation and had fun while painting, which supported these findings.

Conclusion

Patients received aesthetic benefits and inner support from the faith and gratitude they had previously felt via art therapy. The patients were able to re evaluate their lives and discover the purpose in them via freestyle creativity and all the many types of artwork that they produced. Our findings demonstrated that terminal cancer patients who were in failing health and faced death could handle their emotional crises with support from a medical team, art appreciation, and hands-on painting. They were able to relieve pressure and suffering brought on by their illnesses and feel the feeling of nonverbal communication (Kuo et al., 2002).

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