



11. Arts in Health: a review of the medical literature. Dr Rosalia Lelchuk Staricoff. Arts Council England. A hospital based review with little research presented in primary care settings. Show good evidence for music, and also staff morale as well as proven benefits for mental well being.

12. Bromley by Bow: Research and evaluation report. Qualitative analysis of many different art projects, in particular reports benefits to older patients and in care of chronic diseases e.g. Asthma and Diabetes. States that it isn't the diseases that create the disability but the patients response to their illness.

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Evidence Base for Arts in Health

There is now a growing evidence base for using arts as a healthcare intervention.

Arts intervention has been quite extensively studied in secondary care and there is now an evolving evidence base to support its use. Its use in Primary Care is less well studied. Richard Smith, then editor of the BMJ, reported in 2002 that, "if health is about adaptation understanding and acceptance, then the arts may be more potent than anything health has to offer." "More and more of life's processes and difficulties- birth, death, sexuality, ageing, unhappiness, tiredness, loneliness, perceived imperfection in our bodies- are being medicalised. Medicine cannot solve these problems.....Worst of all people are diverted from what may be much better ways to adjust to these problems."

In this leader article he goes on to say that 0.5% of the health budget should be spent on the arts. (1)

There have been two major studies of arts intervention in primary care, both taking place at Healthy Living Centres, in rural Devon and inner city London, Bromley by Bow. These reports are by independent researchers and use qualitative methods as well as self rating scores. They both show significant changes in mental health scores as well as other more subtle effects on the primary mental health care team. There is also some evidence from Devon that engagement with an artist reduces GP consultation. (2,12) Dr Sam

Everington states that it is not the disease that causes the disability, it is the patients reaction to that illness.(12)

Other evidence from secondary care shows that creative activity can reduce readmission rates for psychiatric patients (3). In another study creative counselling was shown to be as effective as Fluoxetine in depression (4).

Other specific studies have found improvements in mental health scores and also noted reduction in consultation rates (5,6).

The use of arts, specifically drama and storytelling in dementia patients has been shown to improve cognitive scores (7).

Music has been extensively researched, mostly in hospital settings and found to have positive impact on pain scores (8). Dr Rosemary Starikoff, in her systematic review of the literature found that there was most evidence to support the use of music, especially in hospital settings. (11)

Poetry is quite widely studied and its use in primary care is increasing. There is good evidence of benefit from many sources. (9,10). The effect of disclosure during creative writing was studied by Pennebaker. He was able to show better self management of chronic conditions and less reliance on medical support following creative writing. In addition he has shown improvements in immune responses and outcomes from prostatic cancer after disclosure through writing (13)

References

1. Smith R, Spend (slightly) less on health and more on arts. BMJ 325 1432-1433. 2002.
2. Upstream Healthy Living intervention. Upstream, Crediton, Devon. 2002.. Independently evaluated by Peninsular medical school researchers
3. Colgan S et al A tentative start to community care. Psychiatric bulletin 15 1991.
4. Appleby L et al, A control study of Fluoxetine and cognitive behaviour counselling in the treatment of post natal depression BMJ 314 1997.
5. Matarasso F Use or ornament- The social impact of the arts, Comedia Stroud. 1997.
6. HEA/SHM Arts for Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire. Health Education Authority 1999.
7. Allan and Killick. Undiminished possibilities: the arts in dementia care, Journal of Dementia Care, 8, 3, 16-1.
8. Davis C (1992) The effects of music and basic relaxation instruction on pain and anxiety of women undergoing outpatient Gynaecological procedures. Journal of Music Therapy, 29, 4, 202-216.
9. Poetry helps healing. Phillips. Lancet 1996 347:332-333. Evidence that writing reduces stress and promotes well being.
10. Keep taking the words, BJGP 2000 50:80-81 G Bolton et al. Using creative writing in general practice.