

Art therapy improves stroke victims' quality of life

Home > Impacts of arts and culture > Health and wellbeing impacts of arts and culture

This research was conducted by **Kerry Beesley, Jennifer Helen White, Megan K. Alston, Anne L. Sweetapple and Michael Pollack** at the **Hunter New England Local Health Network and Area Health Service, Australia**

Summary

This paper presents the results of a series of interviews conducted with people in New South Wales, Australia who were participating in art therapy programmes after having suffered a stroke. Involvement in the art therapy 'proved to have benefits for participants' confidence, self-efficacy, community participation and quality of life'.

The findings come from focus groups and one-to-one interviews

The researchers conducted two focus groups (each with four people in them) and subsequent interviews with 11 people. The subsequent interviews were used to pick up on comments raised in the focus groups.

The art therapy sessions were designed specifically for stroke survivors

The sessions took place once a week for eight weeks. Each session lasted two hours and included a range of individual painting and drawing activities. Participants were also given the opportunity to contribute to a collective work of art.

The benefits reported by the participants were social and psychological

The benefits for patients from the art therapy sessions included the opportunity for a creative outlet (they were able to try something new), self-awareness (they were able to reflect on their situation in relation to others') a sense of overcoming a challenge, increased confidence and lifestyle benefits including a structured routine, socialising and a chance to escape the day-to-day. Some were inspired to continue to learn more about art. Being part of a group that provided mutual support and encouragement was important too. There were no direct physiological benefits that could be attributed to the arts health programme.

Something to keep in mind

The interviews were conducted with a relatively small sample (recruited through convenience sampling), and there is no reason to assume that they were representative of a wider population.

Keywords

drawing **painting** **focus group** **Australia** **stroke** **interview** **art therapy**

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Author email	jennifer.white@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

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