CultureCase

Dance can improve quality of life for those with Parkinson’s Disease

This research was conducted by **Alice Davies** and **Ian Patrick Noonan** at **King’s College London**.

Summary

Parkinson’s Disease frequently impacts the balance and gait of sufferers and participation in dance programmes has been shown to generate improvements in patients. This article consolidates the existing literature on the topic. It looks beyond the physiological impact of dance therapies to explore how social and artistic activity increases the quality of life of those with Parkinson’s. The research found that participants in such schemes frequently experience greater feelings of inclusion, creativity and wellbeing.

The paper focuses on the English National Ballet’s (ENB) Dance for Parkinson’s Programme

The programme was designed not only to provide dance as a physical therapy, but it also put an onus on the social benefits of being part of a dance company, and the impacts of artistry, self-expression and collaboration, which are inherent in dance as an artform.

The social and artistic impacts of the ENB scheme are significant

The social aspect is especially important given that 90 per cent of people with Parkinson’s suffer from anxiety, depression and social isolation as a result of the disease. A specific outcome that is highlighted in the paper is that the collaborative nature of a dance company environment motivated participants to continue attending the classes, in a way that hadn’t been noted before in organised exercise groups and physiotherapy sessions.

The research would suggest that the strong social, creative and collaborative environment of a dance company offers an effective vehicle for treatment that goes beyond the physiological which, as one participant put it, allows individuals to ‘rediscover a sense of self’.

This summary is by **Alexandra Talbott, King's College London**

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