

## THE ROLE OF ART IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICES

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### ABSTRACT

The article is a literature review that focuses on the technique and the advantages revealed in practice of art therapy for cancer patients. Here, we sought to summarize its worldwide images by searching PubMed for art therapy in an effort to learn more about its theoretical foundation, practical uses, and potential future. We zeroed down on research into art therapy, which mostly employs painting and drawing as mediums, because of the long-standing belief that artistic expression may serve therapeutic purposes. Numerous studies have looked at how art therapy has helped cancer patients emotionally. Cancer patients who participate in art therapy report much less feelings of melancholy, anxiety, and physical discomfort. Previous research has indicated that while patients may feel less pain after therapy has ended, the psychological advantages only remain for the duration of treatment. Longitudinally, anxiety and depressive symptoms have been found to diminish in another research. This research review highlights the need of designing art therapy programs with the needs of cancer patients, their loved ones, and medical professionals in mind.

**KEYWORDS:** art therapy, cancer, therapeutic

### INTRODUCTION

Creative expression is mobilized in the service of mental and physical health in expressive arts therapy, a multimodal holistic health intervention. Clients who struggle to put their feelings into words can benefit greatly from this approach. These people may find an outlet for their emotions via the many artistic mediums. In this post, we'll talk about expressive arts therapy, dissecting its components and distinguishing it from creative arts treatments in the process. You will learn how to include expressive arts therapy into your solo and group adult psychotherapy and counseling sessions. The post will also provide a quick overview of some of the greatest publications on the topic, as well as introduce training programs and degrees in expressive arts therapy. We made three helpful CBT exercises available for free download before proceeding. You'll get a deep understanding of Positive CBT and the skills you need to use it in your practice as a therapist or coach by completing these scientifically grounded activities.

Individuals with mental illness, physical disability, or other life challenges, as well as those who are just interested in bettering themselves, might benefit from engaging in art therapy by working with a trained professional. Art therapy is the therapeutic use of creative expression via the creation and inspection of visual artifacts. Everyone from a child learning to write to a person with intellectual disabilities digging in the mud to an elderly lady creating a graphic artwork may benefit from this.

This may also suggest that the complexity of art therapy grows as its practitioners and their clients vary. Looking at the connection and nature of art and therapy may help us distinguish between the two. When art therapy is used for its intended therapeutic objectives, it is not seen or practiced in the conventional manner. While it's true that many art therapy activities may help people feel better, it's important to highlight the discipline's validated, objective goal. Interacting with a visual canvas, for example, may be relaxing, satisfying, frustrating, and even softly "restorative" when done by a person in the moment. Even if this art movement is introspective and reserved, the fashionable union is essential to the delivery of a good product, which in this case is a good canvas.

The act of creating art isn't the only therapeutic component of art therapy. An individual can gain intellectual and spiritual insight by connecting the significance of a work of art to their own life situation when it is used as a means of communication, specifically for conveying repressed sentiments, profound feelings, and maladaptive musings, and then later discussed with a specialist.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**Shukla A, Choudhari S G (2022)** Art therapy is increasingly being utilized to treat mental health issues, with positive effects on symptom management, cognitive decline, and quality of life. Freer

expression, better mental health, and stronger connections are just some of the benefits of art therapy. The underlying premise of art therapy is that healing and improvement are possible via creative activity. This analysis surveys the literature on the potential benefits of arts engagement on mental health. PubMed, the World Health Organization's database on mental health, Google, and Google Scholar were all used in a comprehensive literature search. The benefits of art therapy for adult mental health recovery are explored in this literature review. It zeroes down on visual art therapy as a means of standardizing the "creative arts" and providing a definition of the distinctive components and beneficial effects of art therapy used by mental health services. Patients' mental health was observed to improve when art therapy was used as a complementary treatment.

**Liu, Zhen & Yang, Zulan & Xiao (2021)** Bibliometric analysis and keyword co-occurrence analysis are two examples of the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this work. The findings show that (1) most current research on AT focuses on investigating and evaluating study populations and disorders, as well as the many forms of AT and the therapeutic effects of AT. Children, military veterans, and teenagers make up the bulk of the AT research population; qualitative research is the technique of choice for studying AT. Creative arts therapy and group AT are two frequent forms of AT. Trauma, depression, psychosis, dementia, and cancer are among conditions that may be helped by AT. In addition, the therapeutic approaches include primarily theatrical, musical, and physical components. Additionally, computer systems are an important evaluation tool in the study of AT; (2) the future development trend of AT-aided health and well-being, based on research hotspots, could be focused on children, schizophrenia, well-being, mental health, palliative care, veterans, and the elderly in the context of addressing COVID-19 challenges; and (3) future AT-aided health and well-being could pay more attention to innovating and integrating the therapeutic methods of behavior change.

**Zubala, Ania & Kennell (2021)** The technique allows for in-depth analysis of publications from a wide range of methodological perspectives, making it ideal for preliminary exploratory investigations. Only papers reporting actual results were included for the formal analysis. Findings Twelve studies were included in the synthesis, including the use of digital technology for both distant distribution and as a medium for artistic creation, after a search of over four hundred records. The possible advantages and disadvantages of using digital technology in therapy sessions, as well as ethical considerations, resistance to digital arts media, technical constraints, and consequences for the therapeutic connection and process, are examined. Best practice suggestions and technical breakthroughs that may render obsolete some of the difficulties are also evaluated. We propose a cautious openness to new ideas in both study and practice, and we point the way toward future developments in the field. Conclusion This analysis compiles evidence from a growing body of literature that shows art therapists are increasingly using digital technology for online delivery and digital art production. The clinical, practical, and ethical issues that art therapy faces, as well as the potentially enormous possibilities that technology presents, must be taken into account. The purpose of this study is to start discussions and encourage further research on how technology may expand art therapy's reach and impact without jeopardizing client safety or sacrificing the profession's core values.

**Jingxuan Hu (2021)** Art therapy is one of the medical therapies that has shown promising clinical results in the treatment of mental problems, despite the fact that it is a non-pharmacological supplementary and alternative therapy. However, a comprehensive systematic evaluation of the literature in clinical settings is absent. Here, we sought to summarize its worldwide images by searching PubMed for art therapy in an effort to learn more about its theoretical foundation, practical uses, and potential future. We zeroed down on research into art therapy, which mostly employs painting and drawing as mediums, because of the long-standing belief that artistic expression may serve therapeutic purposes. As a result, 413 pieces of published literature were located. After reading the whole papers, we concluded that the use of art therapy for patients with mental problems has progressively increased with beneficial effects, most notably a reduction in the suffering caused by mental symptoms. Depressive and anxiety disorders, as well as cognitive impairment and dementias like Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, and autism, are among the most common of these conditions. These results suggest that art therapy can be used as an adjunct treatment for diagnosing diseases, aiding medical professionals in obtaining complementary information different from conventional tests, and helping patients open up and share their feelings, views, and experiences during therapy.

We respectfully submit that art therapy's therapeutic applications on mental diseases have much untapped promise.

**Sharma, Yam. (2017).** Some medical conditions may be helped or treated using art therapy. The visual, performing, literary, and performing arts are used for this purpose. The creative process is at the heart of the arts, whereas the therapeutic process is at the heart of medicine. To heal, create, and appreciate art is the essence of art therapy. Individuals may find relief from mental health issues, physical discomfort, and other challenging emotions, feelings, and experiences via the use of art therapy. People may let go of their worries and use their creativity in a productive way. When dealing with issues of mental health or behavioral illness, art therapy is really helpful. Art therapy may be the primary mode of treatment when other approaches fail. The healing potential of art, however, has been undervalued here. Incorporating artistic practice into medical care may facilitate recovery. The therapy and healing industries might benefit from this endeavor. This page makes an effort to explain what art therapy is, how it may be used to aid in healing, and the several forms it can take.

## METHODS

The studies cited in this review were published in peer-reviewed English language academic, health science, and medical journals. The search terms "art," "therapy," "cancer," and "patients" were used to narrow the results in Google Scholar. Articles about art therapy for all ages are included. To begin the analysis, we compiled the studies into a matrix that included the following columns: study title, study year, study objective, study subject, study art therapy methodology (task, tool, material), and study participant benefit. Eleven articles were gathered for this evaluation of the literature. There were ten articles from wealthy nations and only one from a developing one. Adults, adolescents, and children with cancer made up all of the study participants. We prioritized studies whose aims fell within one of two broad categories: (a) investigating how art therapy treatments may be tailored to individual patients' needs; and (b) investigating how art therapy impacts patients' health and well-being.

## RESULTS

### Art Therapy: Task-Tool-Material

Our literature review revealed a handful of recurring jobs and their respective goals (Table I).

**Table i. Purpose/objective and task of art therapy**

Purpose/Objective	Task
prevent or reduce anxiety and fear	medical play, dramatization
tension-release, reduce symptoms of depression	art activities involving expressive movement, such as watercolor or acrylic painting, finger painting
build self confidence, re-establish self identity	art activities exploring life meaning, creating symbolic expressions, following with discussion or talk.
self-acceptance	art with meditative approach, sharpening integrated senses through art appreciation activity

We also get to the following technical conclusions on art therapy methods:

- 1) **Making decision/variety of choice to choose:** Cancer sufferers are restricted in their regular activities. Therefore, it is crucial that students learn to exercise self-discipline by picking out their own activities, as well as the resources and media they engage with. We recommend that art therapists provide a variety of activities (varying in medium type and application) during each session. Patients would have the freedom to choose an activity they like and are comfortable with.
- 2) **Moving along with the phase of cancer journey:** There are three major stages in the progression of cancer: a) the first diagnosis and treatment phase, b) the intermediate or maintenance phase of therapy, and c) the subsequent relapse or advanced disease stages with a bad prognosis. Understanding and adapting art therapy to these stages and the individual's physical and mental requirements is crucial.

B. Art therapy's long-term benefits We classify the advantages as either immediate (felt by cancer patients, carers, and medical personnel immediately), or long-term (felt by these groups over a longer period of time). Patients often experience immediate and significant physical and mental changes while undergoing treatment. Long-term advantages may result in sustained psychological gains or even lasting lifestyle adjustments, according to reports.

Our literature review revealed that cancer patients who participate in therapeutic art activities may experience two main benefits:

**1) Short term benefit:** Here are just a handful of the stated advantages people have experienced both during and immediately after treatment:

**a) Emotional release:** In art therapy, patients are encouraged to express themselves creatively in order to work through difficult or embarrassing feelings.

**b) Building self-confidence and strength:** Art therapy may help patients feel more in charge of their lives, which has a positive effect on their confidence and resilience.

**c) Creating distraction:** Depression and anxiety may be alleviated, as well as pain, via the use of art therapy. However, the event has to be planned meticulously to ensure that all cancer patients benefit from the distractions it provides. One study, however, stands out by claiming that they used a mindfulness-based strategy to generate distraction. The purpose of the diversions was supposedly to have the patient thinking about their own lives again.

**d) Help improving communication:** Patients might feel more supported and heard by having their stories heard and shared with others (mentors, families, therapists) as part of the treatment process. Keeping up with art therapy activities, having obstacles to overcome, and setting goals to work toward are all crucial.

**2) Long-term benefit:** Some of the following advantages have been highlighted in reports, and they may have an effect on longer-lasting psychological improvements or permanent changes in the individual:

- Improve internal consistency and sense of wholeness. This advantage is connected to the enhancement of one's feeling of power and self-assurance, but it applies to a more general and profound degree.
- Regaining one's vigor for life and a feeling of completeness

### **The Application Prospects of Art Therapy**

Life expectancy is rising as a result of advances in medical science and technology. However, it is not without its drawbacks and may cause emotional distress for people undergoing therapy, particularly those with mental illness. As a result, there is a growing need to identify effective complementary treatments for enhancing patients' quality of life and mental wellbeing. In our analysis, we observed that those with depression and anxiety were the most prevalent beneficiaries of art therapy's personalized format.

Drawing from the foregoing, it can be concluded that art therapy, as a non-verbal psychotherapy method, not only serves as an auxiliary tool for diagnosing diseases, which helps medical specialists obtain much information that is difficult to gain from conventional tests, judge the severity and progression of diseases, and understand patients' psychological state from painting characteristics, but also is a useful therapeutic method, which helps patients open up and share their feelings, views, and other thoughts through the medium of art. Art therapy is also easily accepted by patients of diverse ages, linguistic backgrounds, medical conditions, and geographical locations.

Art therapy in healthcare settings, such as hospitals and clinics, has the potential to improve non-verbal communication between patients and the medical professionals who care for them. Additional types of treatment, such as music, dancing, and other sensory stimulation, may enhance the benefits of art therapy.

Evidence for the efficacy of art therapy utilizing painting as the medium for intervention is weak (Mirabella, 2015), and the medical mechanism underpinning it is unknown (Salmon, 1993; Broadbent et al., 2004; Guillemin, 2004). Clinical trials with big samples and high-quality standards are currently missing, despite the fact that many research have indicated that art therapy may enhance patients' quality of life and mental health. Furthermore, there is a paucity of follow-up evaluation of art therapy, thus its long-term impact is unknown at this time.

Medical and health regulations (possibly due to the potential of messes, lack of sink and cleaning space for proper disposal of paints, storage of paints, and toxins of allergens in the paint), a lack of space for the artwork to dry without getting in the way or getting damaged, and negative medical settings and family environments can make it challenging to implement art therapy using painting as the medium in hospitals. Despite this, the enormous advantages of art therapy make it possible to triumph over these challenges. Consequently, we tentatively hold that art therapy has much promise in the treatment of mental diseases.

Possible future areas of research for art therapy include the following. To begin with, more rigorous and trustworthy clinical studies need to be conducted. Second, there should be a wide variety of ways to evaluate art therapy's success. To be more persuasive, the inquiry has to use objective techniques, such as brain imaging and hematological investigations, in addition to subjective scale assessments. Third, it will be important to describe the specifics of the art therapy and patients for objective comparisons, such as the kinds of illnesses, painting techniques, needed credentials of the therapist to do the art therapy, and the theoretical underpinning and mechanism of the treatment. This should be consistently advocated for in healthcare facilities and outside of them as well. Fourth, the body of knowledge surrounding art therapy should be used to progressively shape recommendations. Finally, art therapy's mechanism has to be studied in greater depth at several levels, including the neurological, cellular, and molecular.

## CONCLUSION

The debate demonstrates that any creative and expressive tools and medias may be integrated into the art therapy technique, provided that the patient is not coerced into or against their will. A wide range of possibilities for mental stimulation should be made available to patients. The objective of diversion from pain and anxiety is often addressed in studies that focus on the immediate advantages. Studies that focus on the long-term gain are usually conducted with the hope of improving patients' lives while they are at their most vulnerable. The individuals around cancer patients benefited from art therapy as well, particularly the patients' primary caretakers. They saw that the same upbeat vibe was being transmitted from patient to caregiver, which made for a more relaxed and stress-free environment.

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