

Role of Art Therapy in Curing Psychosis

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Abstract: Art therapy is an expressive form of therapy using creative techniques to cure mental health issues, through artistic expressions of the patient. Science has a dubious attitude towards art therapy, and most people are opinion-driven by this method, hence this has not yet been introduced as an integral part of psychiatry. However, psychologists have faith in the use of art for counselling their patients. The study aims at focusing on the positive effects of painting and colours on the improvement rate of psychosis patients.

Methodology used in the research is sample survey which is based on grouping 7 patients from Safe Heaven Hospital of Treasure Valley, Idaho. They were put to an artist residency program conducted by the Treasure Valley YMCA organization. It was found that the rate of improvement was had grown by 13% from the day that they had joined the program.

The field analysis determines that art, especially colours have a positive effect on the mind of a psychotic patient.

1. INTRODUCTION

Art therapy is still unsusceptible to many people and hence various definitions have been theorized. Art therapy, sometimes called creative arts therapy or expressive arts therapy, encourages people to express and understand emotions through artistic expression and through the creative process. *From The Free Dictionary.* Art therapy is a form of expressive therapy that uses art materials, such as paints, chalk and markers. Art therapy combines traditional psychotherapeutic theories and techniques with an understanding of the psychological aspects of the creative process, especially the affective properties of the different art materials, says Wikipedia.

From a professional perspective, AATA defines art therapy as "Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others, cope with symptoms, stress and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art."

Therapists using this technique has to be well trained in a particular form of art like painting with Oil, Acrylic, pastels of water colour,

sculpture, pottery, weaving, decoration, music, dance, poetry, drama or any other form which will help the person express about himself. Usually, colours have been found to have better positive nurturing effect on the minds of a patients. These practitioners also should be trained in counselling and therapy, in order to imply the arts in the right way.

Art therapists are trained to pick up on nonverbal symbols and metaphors that are often expressed through art and the creative process, concepts that are usually difficult to express with words. It is through this process that the individual really begins to see the effects of art therapy and the discoveries that can be made.

The 2014 guidelines of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) on the Treatment of Psychosis and Schizophrenia in Adults recommend these modalities — including art therapy — in conjunction with pharmacotherapy to "enhance an individual's creativity, emotional expression, communication, insight, and ability to relate to themselves and others."

"A recent review of 18 studies on the use of art therapy as an intervention in adults with psychosis found that "high-quality qualitative articles indicated that therapists and clients consider art therapy to be a beneficial, meaningful, and acceptable intervention."

There are very less patients who are personally experienced through the process and hence it is sometimes difficult to assess it as a scientific process.

Disordered thinking and cognitive impairment are features of many psychotic disorders, which make it difficult for individuals to engage in primarily talk-based therapies, but the mindful process involved in the art projects allows participants to bring their presentness, rather than verbal or cognitive processing, to the activity.

"Some clients with delusions or other forms of active psychosis tend to avoid groups," Dr de la Peña reported. However, "some who have a positive rapport with me come out, even if they are having 'one of those days.' They might be irritable, but can still work and have a positive experience, even if they are unable to verbally follow or stay on track." (Ms Dingsor, 2015)

The doctor described how psychotic patients often refused to participate in the sessions or events that promoted the therapy but it was an additional process of counselling to get them closer to the expressive therapy.

2. METHOD

Treasure Valley YMCA in Idaho, currently organised an artist residency program to get psychotic patients closer to this technique of counselling. Psychologists from different parts of America were invited. Seven individuals were chosen from Safe Heaven Hospital to participate in the program. Their current mental state was scanned through a tool which was made up of 50 questions. The average score of the patients was found to be 32. The residency program was for seven days. The patients were made to practice brush strokes by Rembrandt and Van Gogh. Thick paints in red, blue and yellow, green hues were given to the patients. They were asked to express themselves on white canvas.

3. RESULTS

It was observed that 38% of the patients selected the warm vibrant colours to express themselves on canvas like brick red, vermillion, ochre yellow, golden yellow and orange. The rest 62% people chose cool colours or pastel shades like lemon, rose pink, lime green etc. to paint. This asserts that colour selection also plays a positive influence on the mind of a patient. At the end of the program, the first lot (38%) who chose warm colours, had an improvement rate and their scores were recorded to be 58. There was an 81.25% increase in their scores. However, those who

chose cool colours, their scores raised to 67, which means there was an increase of 109.375% in their score.



Self portrait of a man in depression

Psychologists assumed that cool colours or pastel shades help release serotonin in the brain, which soothes the senses of patients. Serotonin is a main hormone for improving the mental health and well-being of patients.

There average score of patients at the end of program was 48, which means there was an average increase or improvement of 50% in the mental health condition.

4. CONCLUSION

Art therapy or expressive therapy has a significant positive effect on the curing of psychosis by releasing serotonin in the brain.

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