



ARTS IN HEALTHCARE

Around the world, the arts are emerging as an integral component of healthcare. Today, healthcare initiatives that involve partnerships between arts and health professionals are demonstrating real benefits—improving patient outcomes, helping people make connections, and engendering a sense of community.

Arts in Healthcare is a diverse field representing over 16,000 medical, arts, and creative arts therapies professionals dedicated to transforming the experience of healthcare by connecting people with the power of the arts at key moments in their lives. This rapidly growing field integrates the arts, including literary, performing, visual arts, and design, into a wide variety of healthcare and community settings for therapeutic, educational, and recreational purposes.

HIGHLIGHTS

Research demonstrates the benefits of the arts in healthcare in hospitals, nursing homes, senior centers, private homes, or other locations within the community. Studies show that integrating the arts into healthcare settings helps to:

- cultivate a healing environment;
- support the physical, mental, and emotional recovery of patients;
- communicate health and recovery information; and
- foster a positive environment for caregivers that reduces stress and improves workplace satisfaction and retention.

Arts in healthcare programs and creative arts therapies have been applied to a vast array of health issues—from post-traumatic stress disorder to autism, mental health, chronic illnesses, Alzheimer's and dementia, neurological disorders and brain injuries, premature infants, and physical disabilities—to improve patients' overall health outcomes, treatment compliance, and quality of life.

In 2004 and 2007, the Society for the Arts in Healthcare partnered with The Joint Commission and Americans for the Arts to conduct surveys that examined the presence of the arts in U.S. healthcare facilities. These surveys reveal that approximately 45% of responding healthcare institutions have arts programs utilizing creative arts therapists and/or professional artists in their facilities. Reasons for investing in arts programs include: to benefit patients' physical, mental, and emotional recovery; to create a healing environment; and to help patients' families.

Between 2004 and 2007, organizations funding their arts programs through their operating budgets only rose by 16%. Although it is promising that organizations reported an increase, this accounted for only about half of the arts programs in healthcare institutions. Additional support is necessary for arts in healthcare programs to adequately respond to our nation's growing healthcare needs.

BENEFITS OF THE ARTS IN HEALTHCARE

- Documented benefits of participating in **visual arts and art therapy activities** include:
 - improving depression and influencing fatigue levels in cancer patients on chemotherapy (Bar-Sela, Atid, Danos, Gabay, & Epelbaum, 2007);
 - reducing acute stress symptoms in pediatric trauma patients (Chapman, Morabito, Ladakakos, Schreier, & Knudson, 2001); and
 - improving care for veterans returning from Iraq with symptoms of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Collie, Backos, Malchiodi, Spiegel, 2006).
- Providing **music therapy and music interventions** has been found effective in:
 - increasing comfort level post-operatively (Pölkki, Vehviläinen-Julkunen, & Pietilä, 2001);
 - decreasing use of sedatives during procedures (Loewy, Hallan, Friedman, & Martinez, 2005; Walworth, 2005); and
 - increasing quality and length of life for individuals diagnosed with terminal cancer (Hilliard, 2003).
- Literature shows that most of the experimental research about **dance and movement** has been done in the **dance/movement therapy** field. More recent findings regarding the benefits of dance include:
 - being first on a list of leisure activities that most contribute to the delay in onset of Alzheimer's disease for those at risk of the disorder (Verghese et al. 2003); and
 - improving mobility in individuals with fibromyalgia (Bojner-Horwitz, Theorell, & Anderberg, 2003).
- Interventions involving **dramatic arts, drama therapy, and psychodrama** have demonstrated the following benefits:
 - creating understanding and easing isolation for breast cancer patients (Sinding, Gray, Grassau, Damianakis, and Hampson, 2006);
 - helping medical students, residents, and staff understand the humanistic elements of end-of-life care (Steckart and Rosenfeld, 2004); and
 - addressing cognitive functioning and quality of life issues important for older adults to live independently (Noice and Noice, 2004).
- Studies using **creative writing and poetry therapy** as an intervention report:
 - improving lung function in students and adults with asthma after written emotional expression (Bray, Theodore, Patwa, Margiano, Alric, & Peck, 2003); and
 - decreasing visits to physicians and reducing symptom complaints (Pennebaker, 1997, 2004).
- Arts and healthcare research has also focused on **architecture and design** issues:
 - patients recovering from gall bladder surgery who had views of a small park with trees and flowers had better nurse evaluations, took less medication, and had shorter hospital stays than individuals with a view of an adjacent brick wall (Ulrich, 1984); and
 - intensive care patients exposed to nature pictures of water and trees experienced less post-operative anxiety than patients exposed to the other visuals suggesting that placing photographs of certain natural environments in hospital settings might positively impact post-operative recovery (Ulrich, Lunden, & Eltinge, 1993).