HEALTH BENEFITS OF OLDER ADULTS’ PARTICIPATION IN CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMS

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Presentation Objectives

- To explain changes in the aging brain thought to enhance creative activities in later life
- To review scientific research evidence regarding the range of health benefits for older adults from participation in arts programs
- To further understanding of ways to improve and expand the evidential base for health benefits of arts participation
- To review local resources for bringing arts programs to older adults.
Arts, Health and Healing

- Connection across cultures and time
- Non-pharmacological and non-medical intervention for health and healing
- Brings together health researchers and practitioners with the arts community
- Requires an evidence base to qualify for inclusion in AoA’s toolkit of best practices

http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HPW/Index.aspx
Contributions of Dr. Gene D. Cohen

References:


Dr. Cohen’s Thesis

- Aging brain (10% loss) vs. reserve capacity
- Neuroscience: brain plasticity (use it or lose it)
- Decreased left/right sidedness with age
- Creativity enhancement: more integrated brain functioning
“Every stage of life has its own ordeals and rewards. My reward for having reached my present age is that this has given me time to carry out more than the whole of my original agenda; and an historian’s work is of the kind in which time is a necessary condition for achievement.”
Methods for the Review

- Systematic literature review in 2009 using Wolter Kluwer Health (Ageline), Sociological Abstracts and Academic Search Complete

- All study designs were included and only English language articles were reviewed

- Keywords used: creative*, health promotion, arts, program*, aging, perform*, and health

*denotes the derivatives and variations of the word
Methods (continued)

Inclusion criteria for articles

1. Creative activities that either exclusively targeted or included older adults
2. Activity was not a therapy or arts & crafts
3. Participatory activity, not observant
4. Documentation of at least one health-related benefit
Meta-Analysis Results

• 2,205 articles identified using search terms (publication dates 1978 through 2009)
• 42 were retained for review
• 11 met inclusion criteria and were retained (references included)
• No existing meta-analysis or review articles found on health benefits of professionally-led participatory arts programs for older adults
Gene Cohen’s Leadership and Research

• Philosophic change from aging as decline and decrement to aging as potential and accomplishment

• 2001 Creativity and Aging Study: Multi-site longitudinal study of health benefits of professionally-led, community-based cultural programs for those 65+

• Theoretically grounded (mastery and social engagement theory)

• Performing Arts Program: Physical, social and creative components
Outcome Measures

Health Ratings
• Overall health rating; physical and emotional health problems
• Morale, depression and loneliness

Health Behaviors
• Number of doctor visits
• Number of over-the-counter medications
• Number of falls
• Number of activities; number of weekly activities
Cohen et al., 2006

- Impact of 30-week participation in a professionally-led chorale group on overall health & mental health of older adults in intervention (n=77) and comparison groups (n=64)
- Mostly female and Caucasian subjects
- Pre-test and post-test after 12 months
- Findings showed intervention subjects reported better overall health; used fewer over-the-counter medications; had fewer falls, fewer physician visits, higher morale and decreased loneliness scores
Cohen et al., 2007

- 24-month follow up of participants in the chorale and comparison groups (three data points)

- Findings showed intervention subjects had a smaller increase in use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs and reported fewer health problems
Davis, 1985

• 17 one-hour creative drama classes over 6 weeks
• 13 women/2 men age 67-84; all Caucasian
• Qualitative analysis of weekly self-reports pre- and post-participation
• Decrease in anxiety and one measure of hostility
Bohlmeijer et al., 2005

- Reminiscence and creative expression - 2.5 hours for 12 sessions to reduce depression
- Pre- and post-test design
- 79 participants; mean age of 66; mostly female
- Significant improvement in depression and mastery
Kinney & Rentz, 2005

- Comparative effectiveness of art program (Memories in the Making) compared to structured activity (e.g., word game, crafts) on emotional well-being indicators.
- 12 older adults with dementia at two day centers.
- 7 female/5 male; age 65-85; 5 African American and 7 Caucasian.
- Those in the art program had higher levels of well-being on five indicators.
Bugos et al., 2007

- Effects of Individualized Piano Instruction (IPI) over 6 months on cognitive functioning

- Random assignment to IPI (16 persons) and control group (15 persons); no baseline differences; used pre- and post-tests

- Findings showed IPI subjects had better performance on two cognitive tests (perceptual speed and memory)
Alpert et al., 2009

• Impact of jazz dance instruction on balance, cognition and mood
• Convenience sample of 13 women age 52-88, 12 Caucasian
• Self report with repeated measures design pre- and post-intervention for 15 weeks
• Findings showed improvement in balance
Noice et al., 1999

• Intervention: four weeks of acting classes to assess impact on cognitive skills using pre- and post-tests
• 13 participants age 65-82, all healthy and well-educated
• Improved test scores indicate acting lessons can improve immediate and delayed recall in healthy older adults
Noice et al., 2004

• Study of theatrical training on cognition and mental health using 124 subjects from a senior center in acting, visual arts, and no treatment groups

• Age 60-86 and 96% Caucasian

• Acting group subjects had higher scores on recall and problem-solving and the psychological well-being measure than those in the two comparison groups
Noice et al., 2006

• Tested the theatrical training for four weeks, twice a week

• 18 adults in a CCRC with mobility and memory impairments

• Findings from two pre-tests and one post-test showed improvement in word recall and problem-solving skills
Noice et al., 2009

- Comparative analysis of cognitive outcomes for 122 older adults randomly assigned to theatrical training group, singing group and no-treatment group
- Age 68-93; mean level of education - 12.8 years
- Eight sessions, twice a week for 4 weeks
- Findings show those in the acting group had improvements in 4 out of 5 cognitive measures compared to those in the other two groups
- Both intervention groups reported higher personal growth compared to the no-treatment group
Limitations of the Studies

• RCTs uncommon
• Small, homogeneous samples
• Convenience sampling
• Short duration of the intervention
• Limited attention to longer term effects (sustained impact)
• Limited description of intervention’s design (content, delivery, instructor, intensity, amount and duration of the intervention)
Conclusions

• Limited number of studies that met inclusion criteria
• Findings suggest that participatory creative and performing arts programs have a range of physical and mental health benefits for older adults
Physical benefits of dance for healthy older adults (over 60)

Study category levels:
1) RCT with over 100 participants
2) RCT with less than 100 participants
3) non-randomized comparisons
4) non-randomized with non-dancers
5) case studies/no control

18 studies identified; no level 1 studies found; 9 were level 2
Results: Keogh et al.

- Dancing can significantly improve muscle endurance, aerobic power, and lower body flexibility
- Significant improvements also relate to fall prevention: improvements in static and dynamic balance, gait performance, gait speed, and agility
Only over the past decade have health researchers examined how arts can:

- Heal emotional injuries
- Increase understanding of self and others
- Enhance self-reflection
- Reduce symptoms
- Alter behaviors and thinking patterns
Primary Art Therapy Areas

• Music engagement
• Visual arts
• Dance and movement (including drama)
• Expressive writing and poetry
Music Therapy

- Decrease anxiety
- Restore emotional balance
- Control over pain
- Reduce heart and respiratory rates
- Reduce serum cortisol level (coronary disease and cancer patients)
Visual Art Therapy

- Improved psychological well-being; decreased negative emotions and increased positive emotions
- Reduced depression, anxiety and stress
- Improved medical outcomes and healing (chronic illness, cancer, hemodialysis, and trauma patients)
Dance and Movement Therapy

- Improved gait, balance, ambulation
- Improved cognitive functioning (recall, problem solving)
- Improved shoulder range of motion & body image
- Improved self-awareness (elderly and breast cancer patients)
Expressive Writing Therapy

- Improvement in CD4+ lymphocyte counts
- Improved control over pain and depressed mood
- Better psychological well-being and less fatigue (HIV, chronic illness, and fibromyalgia patients)
Future Investigations

- Use meaningful control groups
- Specify intervention and outcomes precisely and standardize for cross-study comparisons
- Larger, more diverse samples
- Longer term follow-up
- Conduct in community settings
- Partner with the arts community
Integrate the humanities and arts into all curricular activities to ensure person-centered care

Develop an interactive curriculum that builds on narrative medicine and importance of “story”

Develop clinical experiences for the program

Oversee faculty development in the humanities and arts

www.creativeaging.org
Resources

• American Society on Aging webinars on creative aging programs [www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org)

• Museum of Modern Art (NYC) Program in Arts and Dementia for those with Alzheimer’s and their Caregivers [www.moma.org/learn/programs/alzheimers](http://www.moma.org/learn/programs/alzheimers)

• Science of Creativity and Cognitive Enhancement: learn how to keep the aging brain fit through creative engagement [www.mindramp.org](http://www.mindramp.org)
• Seeks to ensure quality of life for older adults across the cognitive spectrum and to transform the health and well-being of society
• Helps families and artists to bring music to older relatives through song composition and performance www.songwritingworks.org
• Elders and caregivers perform their songs: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1SHAXytcJ8
Resources

- Timeslips Storytelling Project (training manual, DVD and story kit) for those with memory loss [www.timeslips.org](http://www.timeslips.org)

- Elders Share the Arts: A Guide to the Living History Theater Program (integrates personal reminiscence, oral history, and art making; uses visual arts, theater arts, writing, and storytelling) [www.elderssharethearts.org/coreprograms/livinghistory.php](http://www.elderssharethearts.org/coreprograms/livinghistory.php)
Resources

- Stagebridge Senior Theater: Oldest senior theater in the U.S. brings performance arts training (theater, storytelling, and music) to older adults who perform for younger generations
  www.stagebridge.org
Some Local Resources

• Photocoloring  
  (Carolina Martin, Art on Wheels)
• Journaling for Health  
  (Sarah G. Sieradzki, OT, UH)
• Creative Card Making  
  (Deena Baenen, MS, LSW, COTA)
• Drumming  
  (Adam Kukuk, drumming)
• Magic of Memories  
  (Kim Synder, Western Reserve Historical Society)
Some Local Resources

• Art Therapy Studio – Karen Peterson
  http://www.arttherapystudio.org/

• Philosophy: Art making is central to healing and wellness

• Mission statement: Enhancing the quality of life for children and adults affected by spinal cord injury, brain trauma, stroke and multiple sclerosis through the therapeutic use of art

• Currently working at the VA with spinal cord injury, psych., and hospice patients at bedside, one-on-one and in small groups
Thank you!

Questions or comments

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www.benrose.org
References


References


References


Newer Literature Reviews
