Research Evidence for the Health Benefits of Older Adults’ Participation in Arts Programs*

Linda S. Noelker, Ph.D

Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging
Cleveland, Ohio


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Presentation Objectives

To promote the health and quality of life benefits of creative and performing arts programs for older adults

To present findings from a meta-analysis of the research literature on their documented health benefits

To discuss art programs being developed for VA Medical Centers and suggest resources for accessing information about these programs
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
- Require an evidence base to qualify for inclusion in AoA’s toolkit of best practices
Songwriting Works

- Mission: to restore health and community through the power of song
- Seeks to ensure quality of life for older adults across the cognitive spectrum and to transform the health and well-being of society
- Elders' and caregivers share their songs in performance

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1SHAXytcJ8
Methods for the Meta-Analysis

- Systematic literature review using Wolter Kluwer Health (Ageline), Sociological Abstracts and Academic Search Complete
- Reference lists for each article were reviewed to identify other published articles
- Keywords used: creative*, health promotion, arts, program*, aging, perform*, and health
  *denotes the derivatives and variations of the word
Methods (con’t)

Inclusion criteria for articles

1. Had to include creative activities that either exclusively targeted or included older adults
2. Activity was not a therapy or arts & crafts
3. Activity had to be participatory, not observant
4. Had to document at least one health-related benefit
Methods (con’t)

Inclusion screening process
1. Article title and abstract were examined
2. Full text of article was examined if it could not be determined from first step that article met criteria
3. All study designs were included and only English language articles were reviewed.
Methods (con’t)

- Search began June 2009 and ended November 2009
- No existing meta-analysis or review articles found on health benefits of professionally-led participatory arts programs for older adults
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)
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 & 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
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, and 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 aged 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 & creative expression 2.5 hours for 12 sessions to reduce depression
- Pre- & post-test design
- 79 participants; mean age of 66; mostly female
- Significant improvement in depression and mastery
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; 65-85; African American (5) and Caucasian (7)

Those in the art program had higher levels of well-being on five indicators
• 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 aged 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 aged 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
- Aged 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 at 2x 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
- Aged 68-93; mean level of education was 12.8 years
- Eight sessions at 2x 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
Update: New Meta-analysis by Keogh et al.

- Physical benefits of dance for healthy older adults (over 60)
- Study 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: Meta-analysis by Keogh et al.

- Significant increases in muscle endurance, aerobic power, and flexibility
- Regarding falls 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:

- Health emotional injuries
- Increase understanding of self and others
- Enhance self-reflection
- Reduce symptoms
- Alter behaviors and thinking patterns
Primary Arts Areas

- Music engagement
- Visual arts
- Dance and movement
- Expressive writing
Music Therapy

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

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

- 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

- Improvement in CD4+ lymphocyte counts
- Improved control over pain & depressed mood
- Better psychological well-being & 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
Washington DC Area Geriatric Education Center Consortium (WAGECC)

- George Washington University Center on Aging, Health, and Humanities
- National Center for Creative Aging
- Georgetown University
- Howard University
- Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Washington Hospital Center, Providence Hospital
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


References


References


New Meta-Analyses


Resources

- National Center for Creative Aging Website [www.creativeaging.org](http://www.creativeaging.org)
- 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)
Resources

• Science of Creativity and Cognitive Enhancement: learn how to keep the aging brain fit through creative engagement  www.mindramp.org

• Songwriting Works: helps families and artists to bring music to older relatives through song composition and performance  www.songwritingworks.org
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 US 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 (Cindy Hill, BA, Rhythm Culture)
Thank you!

Questions or comments?

Inoelker@benrose.org

www.benrose.org