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The Health Benefits of Visual Art Activities in the Geriatric Population

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The Health Benefits of Visual Art Activities in the Geriatric Population

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PURPOSE

- To assess the efficacy of visual art therapy on the physical and mental health of the geriatric population

METHODS

- A literature review of five studies on visual art activities and health in the geriatric population was conducted
- The following search terms were used: art therapy, visual art, mental health, health, cognition, geriatric, and older adults
- 5 peer-reviewed studies, published between 2016 and 2019, were selected: 2 systematic reviews, 2 experimental studies, and 1 narrative review
- Two experimental studies assessed older adults age 65 and older
 - Both used the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) and a quality of life (QoL) assessment as outcome measures
- Çetinkaya et al. conducted a randomized control study (RCT) that excluded individuals with a history of dementia
- Kim assessed benefits of a combined program in 28 older adults from a welfare center in Korea



CASE DESCRIPTION

- All five discussed the potential impact of art therapy on cognition and dementia as a premise for research
- Çetinkaya et al. examined the efficacy of ceramic painting, while Kim assessed the benefits of a multimodal treatment program that incorporated a variety of activities
- Studies by Roswiyani et al. and Kim examined the benefits of combined physical activity with an arts and crafts program on ADL function and quality of life in older adults
- Studies showed improvements in life satisfaction, cognitive status, ADLs, mood and a reduction in depression

RESULTS

Intervention	Reported Findings
Ceramic Painting	MMSE score of the intervention group ↑ after art therapy (P<.05); QoL score of the intervention group ↑ (but P<.05)
Combined Physical, Recreational, and Arts Program	Improves cognitive function (MMSE), reports of depression, and ADL's
Systematic Reviews	Reports of ↑ “sustained attention” ⁴ and improvements of mood, well-being, and QoL
Narrative Review	Improves communication, fine motor skills, and QoL

CONCLUSION

- The current literature supports the inclusion of visual art therapy as treatment for older adults
- Research shows that art therapy can decrease grief, mourning, negative emotions, and depression while promoting positive memories, socializing, language function and quality of life in older adults
- Art therapy is also correlated with positive effects on emotional status and cognitive status in patients with dementia

CLINICAL RELEVANCE

- Visual art activities are low-intensity interventions that work to improve both gross motor and fine motor skills in the geriatric population
- Ceramic painting and collage making encourage fine motor skills through gripping of tools
- Crafting can also help improve hand-eye coordination with specific directional cues for artistic techniques
- Art activities can help address deficits of upper body strength, stability, proprioception, and tactile skills
- In addition to physical benefits, participant engagement, mood, quality of life, and well-being are positively affected as well
- Current research encourages physical therapists and other healthcare providers to supplement traditional exercise with visual art activities to increase compliance and interaction

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