TITLE: Visual and Literary Art Therapy in Adult Females with Depression: Clinical Evidence and Guidelines

DATE: 31 May 2011

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the clinical evidence regarding the use of art therapy in adult females with depression?

2. What are the evidence based clinical guidelines on the use of art therapy in adult females with depression?

KEY MESSAGE

Evidence suggests that art therapy is effective in reducing depressive symptoms in adult females.

METHODS

A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed In-Process, The Cochrane Library (2011, Issue 5), University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Ovid MEDLINE, Ovid PsychINFO, Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. No filters were applied to limit the retrieval by study type. Where possible, retrieval was limited to the human population. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2006 and May 13, 2011. Internet links were provided, where available.

The summary of findings was prepared from the abstracts of the relevant information. Please note that data contained in abstracts may not always be an accurate reflection of the data contained within the full article.
RESULTS

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and evidence-based guidelines.

Seven randomized controlled trials and four non-randomized studies were identified pertaining to the clinical evidence regarding the use of art therapy for depression. Additional studies of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, evidence from randomized and non-randomized studies\textsuperscript{1,3,5-7,8,9} suggests that art or literary art therapy is generally effective in reducing depressive symptoms in adult women when compared to an unspecified control group. Art or literary art therapy was shown to be comparable to other interventions in reducing depressive symptoms in some studies\textsuperscript{2,4,10}. One non-randomized study\textsuperscript{11} found that, in women abused by intimate partners, changes in depressive symptoms did not reach statistical significance after narrative writing. Additional study details are provided in Table 1. No evidence based clinical guidelines on the use of art therapy in adult females with depression were identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Details of included studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author, Date, Study type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gellaitry, 2010, RCT\textsuperscript{1}</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low, 2010, RCT\textsuperscript{2}</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thyme, 2009, RCT\textsuperscript{3}</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thyme, 2007, RCT\textsuperscript{4}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Details of included studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Date, Study type</th>
<th>Study population</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Results, Author Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monti, 2006, RCT⁵</strong></td>
<td>Women with various cancer diagnoses</td>
<td>MBAT versus wait-list control group</td>
<td>Compared to the control group, the MBAT group reported a significant decrease in symptoms of distress and significant improvements in health-related quality of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oster, 2006, RCT⁶</strong></td>
<td>Women with primary breast cancer</td>
<td>Art therapy versus control</td>
<td>Compared to the control group, the art therapy group reported an increase in coping resources among women after taking part in the art therapy intervention.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Puig, 2006, RCT⁷</strong></td>
<td>Women with breast cancer</td>
<td>Art therapy versus wait-list control group</td>
<td>Art therapy was not effective in enhancing the emotion expression and level of spirituality of the subjects. Art therapy was effective in enhancing the psychological well-being by decreasing negative emotional states and enhancing positive emotional states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hughes, 2011, NRS⁸</strong></td>
<td>Subfertile women</td>
<td>Art therapy</td>
<td>Hopelessness, depression, and anxiety scores (assessed using the Beck Inventories) decreased from baseline levels to the end of the therapy sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carneiro, 2010, NRS⁹</strong></td>
<td>Woman with depression</td>
<td>Jungian and Transpersonal Art Therapy</td>
<td>The woman made a significant recovery in a short period of time, and the art therapy could have potentially contributed to the progress made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kallay, 2008, NRS¹⁰</strong></td>
<td>Female freshman students</td>
<td>Expressive writing and Expressive writing enhanced with REBT</td>
<td>Both tasks were found to significantly reduce levels of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holmes, 2007, NRS¹¹</strong></td>
<td>Women abused by intimate partners</td>
<td>Narrative writing</td>
<td>Changes in depressive symptoms did not reach statistical significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MBAT = mindfulness-based art therapy; NRS = non-randomized study; RCT = randomized controlled trial
REFERENCES SUMMARIZED

Health technology assessments
No literature identified.

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
No literature identified.

Randomized controlled trials


Non-randomized studies


PubMed: PM17951592

Guidelines and recommendations
No literature identified.

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APPENDIX – FURTHER INFORMATION:

Systematic reviews – population not specifically female adults


Randomized controlled trials – population not specifically female adults


Non-randomized studies – population not specifically female adults


Guidelines and Recommendations – population not specifically female adults


Review articles
