

Common Threads: Community Weaving with Patients with Cognitive and Physical Trauma

Elizabeth Allen

Literature Review

- Art therapy with **Acquired Brain Injuries** may be the key to unlock **recovery and rehabilitation** for strokes and brain injuries (Guay, 2018; Kim, Kim, Lee, & Chun, 2008; Michaels, 2010; Kline, 2016)
- Art therapy with Multiple Sclerosis (**MS**) is lacking in literature, but may provide a **sense of mastery and help with adjustment** (Hunt, Nikopoulou-Smyrni & Reynolds)
- **Fiber arts** in art therapy may provide **self-expression, storytelling, coping**; may help build **relationships** within groups (Wachter, 2012; Collier, 2011; Morton, 2011; Demecs & Miller, 2019)
- **Community-based** art therapy projects provide groups of people with a new way to **connect, communicate, and find common ground** (Suk Mun Law, 2012; Ho, Potash, Ho, Ho, & Chen; Klorer, 2014)

Hypothesis: A community weaving project will familiarize patients with a new therapeutic process, bring them closer as a group, and will help patients work on their individual therapy goals.

Goals:

- Patients enjoy the process of weaving; it helps center and calm them
- Sense of community grows as a result of the project; they feel a sense of pride and appreciation for the final product
- Weaving will also help patients work on their physical goals/fine motor skills.

Planned Methods

- Weaving workshop
- Assist patients one-by-one in weaving on large group loom
- Find the best tools and materials for each individual i.e. co-band, grip support, or a mouth stick (*Was not able to get to this step*)
- Display the project in the building
- Measure the results through observations and brief conversations with patients, and my own visual reflections.

Results

- Unable to complete the project to the level I desired, but I was able to begin
- Ran a workshop with six patients; began to work on the project
- Preliminary findings
- Able to engage with three patients to start the group project
- Magee Outpatient had to close due to the covid-19 pandemic

Workshop

- Participant A
 - Diagnosed with MS
 - Enjoyed weaving, enhanced engagement in support group discussion
- Participant B
 - Limited mobility and shoulder pain due to accident
 - Visibly and verbally excited about learning the new process of weaving, worked at a slower pace



My Visual Reflection on the beginning of the project

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Project

- Participant C
 - Diagnosed with MS, required some hands-on assistance and continuous direction
 - Allowed her to open up and begin to build a relationship
- Participant D
 - Diagnosed with MS
 - Jumped right into the project, enjoyed the process and planned to use weaving on independent future projects
- Participant E
 - Diagnosed with MS, exhibited cognitive deficits
 - Very enthusiastic, required flexibility and hands-on help



Conclusion/Recommendations

- Don't have enough data to make any concrete conclusions
- I was able to **familiarize patients with a new therapeutic process**
- Introducing it during group therapy seemed to be **beneficial to their discussions**, so I believe that the final project would have brought them closer as a group.
- Not able to get far enough in the process to know if it would help with individual therapy goals, but the experience of the workshop showed the potential to contribute to the **achievement of goals** for certain individuals
- Weaving **during group therapy** sessions; positive effect on discussion
- Help each patient to start their own **individual weaving project** after the community project is done; continue to develop their skills and contribute to their physical goals

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