

Health and Well-being Benefits from Older Adults' Participation In Creative and Performing Arts

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Objectives

- To explain the evidence-based health and well-being benefits of older adults' participation in creative and performing arts programs
- To highlight Dr. Gene Cohen's leadership in the field of creativity and aging and his important contributions to the research literature
- To promote understanding of how a national research agenda for the arts is moving forward

Scientific Literature Review: Castora-Binkley, Noelker, Prohaska & Satariano, 2010

- Systematic literature review
- 2,205 articles identified using search terms (publication dates 1978 through 2009)
- 42 were retained for review
- 11 met inclusion criteria and were retained (two were by Dr. Cohen)

Conclusions

- Limited number of studies met inclusion criteria
- Findings suggest that participatory creative and performing arts programs have a range of physical and mental health benefits for older adults some of which include improvement in cognitive function, memory, gait, balance, perceived health, and morale

Limitations of the Studies

- Randomized Control Trials uncommon
- Small, homogeneous samples
- Convenience sampling
- Short duration of the intervention
- Limited attention to longer term effects (sustained impact)
- Limited attention to the intensity, amount and duration of the intervention

Cohen et al. Evaluation Research (2006)

- 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 (mechanism is increased sense of control or mastery and social engagement)
- Chorale Performing Arts Program: highly engaging and sustaining quality

Cohen et al. 2006 (con't)

- Impact of 30-week participation in a 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 with 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 than those in the comparison group

National Agenda for Research on the Arts and Aging

- National Academies convened a workshop in September 2012: identified research gaps and opportunities for research on the impact of arts interventions on older adults' health and quality of life
- Music: most common participatory art investigated; others are theater, dance, and creative writing
- Identified benefits: improved cognitive functioning and memory, general self esteem and well-being, and reduced stress
- Research Limitations: see list on slide 5; weak statistical methods (subject attrition; missing data); few cost-benefit analyses

Future Research Opportunities

- Develop better theoretical models
- Develop replicable, rigorous research designs
- Develop measurement tools appropriate for multi-modal arts interventions
- Diversify study populations
- Conduct interdisciplinary studies
- Improve and standardize outcome measures
- Combine interventions for comparative effectiveness analysis
- Conduct cost-benefit analysis

Looking for funding for your research?

- Register at www.grants.gov and create a personal profile and search for funding opportunities
- Check www.arts.gov/research/TaskForce/task-force-members.html for new funding opportunities
- Check Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) www.pcori.org

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Thank you!

Questions or comments?

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