Recovery-oriented practice: Creative art program to enhance mood and wellbeing of older adults

Wong ML(1), Ho WY(1), Lee GYY(1), Lee SW(2)
(1)Occupational Therapy Department, Kwai Chung Hospital, (2)Art in Hospital

Keywords:
creative art
mood
wellbeing
recovery

Introduction
Research evidence supported that creative art can improve depression in older adults. Self-exploration, self-expression, communication and creativity are identified as common therapeutic elements. A creative art program for older adults with mood disturbance was jointly organized by OT Department of Kwai Chung Hospital and Art in Hospital. Recovery-oriented practice was adopted with emphasis on core elements of holistic care, strengths and empowerment. The program offered choices of treatment to address service users’ needs. Therapeutic elements of art therapy were employed to empower them and to explore their strengths. Apart from enhancing mood and psychological wellbeing, the program also aimed to promote personal recovery of the older adults.

Objectives
(1) To enhance mood and wellbeing of older adults with mood disturbance (2) To promote personal recovery (3) To promote therapeutic use of creative arts in local older adults

Methodology
24 sessions of creative art group were conducted for psychogeriatric service users attending day hospital. Each art group lasted for 90 minutes and was led by 1 OT and 2 artist instructors. Participants were guided to explore and learn a variety of art media, including acrylic paintings, Chinese paintings, comic drawings, fabric arts, glasses arts and wood arts. Therapeutic elements of art therapy were integrated in the program. Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), WHO-Five Well-being Index (WHO-5) and Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) were used as outcome measures of mood and psychological wellbeing. Paired-sample t-test was
performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the creative art program.

**Result**

69 participants had joined the creative art programs with over 90% attendance rate in 2014. A significant decrease by 0.9 points in GDS score ($t=2.242$, $P=0.028$) was observed. The scores of WHO-5 and SWEMWBS were maintained. The results showed that creative arts had positive effect on improving participants’ mood and maintaining their psychological wellbeing. Public exhibitions of participants’ artworks were arranged in hospital and community settings as a mean of empowerment and recognition of their achievement. The program was also beneficial to their personal recovery by building up strengths and developing new roles in participating in art activities. A randomized controlled crossover study will be conducted to further examine the effectiveness of creative art programs on older adults with mood disturbance.