

Effect of Art in Healthcare

UCG year 3 project report

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Introduction

Healthcare is something that everyone will come into contact with during their life. The environment in which this healthcare takes place is something that we wanted to look further into, as we believe that it plays a big role in how patients, visitors and healthcare workers experience the hospital. We were specifically interested in the effects of art in the healthcare setting. This is why we, during this project, decided to focus on this topic and tried to answer the research question: Does art in the hospital improve people's well-being?

Our research aim was to understand how art has a positive effect on people in the hospital. We believe art can be used as a form of distraction, and therefore can improve someone's mental health during the stressful time they spend in the hospital. We believe this effect occurs in both patients, visitors and hospital staff.

Our research took six months, and consisted of a literary review as well as field research. We started this project by doing literature research to gather more in depth information about different aspects of our topic, including long stay hospitalization, art and art therapy, and the different stakeholders that are associated with art in healthcare. After this initial stage of literature research, we narrowed down the scope of our project and contacted specialists. We did this both via email and by doing interviews. We spoke to professionals in the art departments of hospitals in the Netherlands (Martini Hospital) and in Switzerland (University Hospital of Geneva) to look at the more practical side of art in the hospital setting. After this, we wanted to gather more information for the perspective of the people in the hospital. We gathered this information by sending out three different types of questionnaires. We send these questionnaires to patients, visitors and health care workers (for the questionnaires: see appendix). The purpose of these questionnaires was to find out more about the kinds of art and art therapies in hospitals and what people's thoughts are about this art. This could then be used to look at possible benefits and drawbacks of art in the hospital and to see if art in the hospital is perceived differently by different groups of people. In the final stage of the project, we combined all of our findings into an online gallery, which showcases the effects art in the hospital environment has. This report will support this gallery and consists of our most important findings. Together, the gallery and this report will be our final project deliverables.

This report will guide you through our findings. First, we will go into the effects of art on patients, then we will look at how art affects visitors and last, we will look at the effect of art on healthcare workers.

Effects of art on patients

Literature on art for patients

Being hospitalized is no fun and it can have jarring effects on emotional and mental well-being. In seniors for example, being hospitalized has been correlated with cognitive decline because of lack of stimulation. Boredom and stress are also some issues affecting patients' well-being during their stay in the hospital (Wilson et al., 2012). Though art may not be a silver bullet to all the issues patients face in a hospital, it can have a great impact on emotional and mental well-being. Art therapy, for example, has been shown to help chemotherapy patients improve depression, anxiety and fatigue (Bar-Sela et al., 2007). Art in waiting rooms has also been shown to decrease restlessness and increases social interaction (Nanda et al., 2012)

Art has been shown to help and improve mental and emotional well-being. Especially neutral art with colors has been shown to have a calming effect on patients. It has also been shown that landscapes and nature is preferred by patients (Lankston et al., 2010). This has become a type of criterion for many hospitals like the Amsterdam UMC and Albert Schweitzer ziekenhuis. Hilda Grave from the Albert Schweitzer ziekenhuis explained in an interview that the art is enforced on patients with a goal of discretion from the situation. So it is important to have neutral art that everyone can enjoy and does not add onto the stress of a hospital or a reminder of a disease.

Patients experience

The effects of better mental well-being, distraction and a break from the stress of a clinical environment was also reflected in our results from our survey. The survey was directed to people who had to stay in a hospital. All of the respondents who had art in the hospital said it made them feel more calm and peaceful, made the hospital less boring and provided a distraction. For no one it had a negative impact, showing that in general people can benefit or be neutral from the art.

These findings highlight the positive impact art in a hospital setting can have, but for patients these positive effects can have a deeper meaning. For some patients the art stays with them in their memories. Like one respondent of the survey mentioned "I still remember the sculptures in particular". Another respondent describes the distracting and stress relieving effect the art had on them. "It was something lovely to look at and to think about during a really stressful time." Michèle LeChevalier, the art coordinator at Hôpital Universitaire de Genève (HUG), explained how art in the form of music or artistic projects could help patients feel included in life. Illness is a part of life, so why separate patients from society? Doing certain art projects can help give patients a purpose. Live music that was often performed before the Corona pandemic, and created a distraction and interaction with the community.

Effects of art on visitors

Literature on art for visitors

Many people pass through the hospital, not only patients but also their loved ones. Visiting someone dear to you in the hospital can be a stressful experience. Art in the hospital could help people relieve a bit of that stress. A study found that visiting a gallery at the hospital increased a feeling of calm and peace for 80% of patient visitors (Fang et al., 2012).

Visitor experience

In our survey visitors also explain how the art allowed for distractions, made them feel more calm and decreased stress. One of the respondents explains how the art allowed a sort of distraction and entertainment. “My sister and I went around taking photographs of all the (kind of ugly) art and did rankings of them on instagram, which distracted us.” Another respondent describes how the art helps with the management of their emotions. “Also helped when I would be really emotional and could not keep together my feelings, looking at a painting gave me the ability to do so.”

The art can have impactful memories for some visitors. For example, Hilda Graverre recalls a family that visited their mother in the hospital often. They would walk past a particular painting and after the mother passed away the family bought the painting.

Though most of the art in the hospital consists of paintings, many also have sculptures. For example in the Schweitzer ziekenhuis there is a sculpture of a dog that has been pet on the nose so often the color of the snout has changed. A response from our survey also recalls the sculptures saying: “I was about eleven years old and me and my little sister would play with the sculptures all the time.”

Michele LeChevalier explains that art can help distract both the patient and visitor of the situation. The HUG had a piano at the psychiatric ward where everyone could play. Helping both patients and visitors to distract themselves and relieve some stress. LeChevalier describes how these art exhibits and art projects allowed the community with visitors into the hospital and allowed patients to stay included in the community.

Effects of art on healthcare workers

Next to the effect art has on patients and visitors, we were also interested in the effect it has on healthcare workers. Through our interview with the art community of the Martinihospital and email contact with the Albert Schweitzer hospital, we found out that the target audience for their art are not only the patients and the visitors, but the hospital staff as well. The goal of these

hospitals is for the art to be a distraction for the sometimes hard and stressful care process. Although there is not a lot of art in the treatment rooms of doctors yet, some hospitals are working to improve this.

After receiving this information, we decided to gather more information on the effect of art on healthcare workers. We did this by doing more literature research, as well as by distributing a questionnaire to healthcare workers. Even though we did not get many responses, the answers to the open questions did give us some quotes that represent the view of healthcare workers, which is also backed up by the literature.

Literature on healthcare workers

In 2006, a study found that art in the hospital setting has a clear contribution to deliver better health, wellbeing and an improved experience to patients and staff alike (Cayton, 2007). This proves that healthcare workers are indeed an interesting group to take into consideration when researching art in the hospital.

Another study found that art in the hospital setting is generally viewed positively by both patients and staff. The success of art is for example implicitly suggested by the complaints from staff from a clinic that had no visual art in it. They described the clinic as too bleak (Lankston et al., 2010). We can conclude from this that hospital staff miss art if it is not there and prefer a working space that has art in it.

A study, done by the Exeter Healthcare Arts Project found that the display of visual arts in the hospital was perceived by patients, staff and visitors to have a positive effect on morale. Among all clinical staff, 72.8% considered that art had a positive effect on their own and their patients' morale (Scher & Senior, 2000). We can conclude from this that healthcare workers see art as having a positive effect on themselves as well as their patients.

Healthcare workers experience

To gather more information, we decided to ask questions about art in hospitals to some healthcare workers. These healthcare workers all worked in Dutch hospitals. They were asked questions about the art that was present in the hospitals that they worked in. This was mostly visual art.

They indicated that artwork improved their experience when working in the hospital. When asked why, some of the answers we got were:

“Art has an effect on your mood. When you had a bad day and you walk through the halls and get to look at beautiful pieces of art, it definitely lifts my mood.”

“It made me put my mind in a different place before a difficult working day.”

We found out that the best features about the art that healthcare workers perceive were that art made the hospital more colorful and less boring, and that it boosted mental or emotional well-being. When asked about the use of art within the healthcare setting, we got answers related to the therapeutic effect of art.

“I think art is very therapeutic. Even if you are not creative it is and always will be a very useful way to express yourself.”

“ I believe art is another kind of therapy”

In short

It is important to look at healthcare workers when researching art in the hospital setting. Healthcare workers appreciate art in their work environment and observe a positive effect on morale in both themselves and their patients due to art in the hospital. Using a questionnaire we found that health care workers perceive that art makes the hospital more colorful and that healthcare workers see that art can have a positive effect on their own mental well-being and has a therapeutic effect on people.

Conclusion

Art in the hospital is seen by different groups of people. During this project, we looked at the effects of art on patients, visitors and healthcare workers. Patients benefit from the art in a hospital setting. It allows for distraction, stress relief and makes the hospital less boring. In general it improves mental and emotional well-being and it allows patients to feel included in life. The arts also had benefits for visitors as it also allowed for stress relief and distraction. For some visitors the art stays in their memory distinctively showing the emotional and claiming impact. Healthcare workers appreciate art in their work environment. They see that art can have a positive effect on their own mental well-being and has a therapeutic effect on people and observe that art has a positive effect on morale in both themselves and their patients.

Visitors, patients and even healthcare workers enjoying art together can help formulate a feeling of community. Overall, the art influences people in a positive sense and any bit of positivity is welcome at an otherwise stressful hospital experience. These positive impacts on mental and emotional well-being are important and art in hospitals should be encouraged.

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Appendix

Here, the links to the questionnaires can be found.

Questionnaire for the patients at a hospital: <https://forms.gle/8CX1NCgUVPP3graj8>

Questionnaire for the visitors: <https://forms.gle/P6XXF1q8sw9A6SsB6>

Questionnaire for the healthcare workers: <https://forms.gle/164ZaRUGWj4yc8LM8>