Creativity and Aging Forum

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Presented by the Society for the Arts in Healthcare and The Museum of Modern Art

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Embrace the moment!
Creativity Matters

Gay Hanna, PhD MFA
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Pablo Picasso

“As one grows older, art and life become one and the same.”
People are living longer and healthier lives

Demographic shift by 2030
  ◦ Over 70 million people will be over 65
  ◦ The number of people over 85 will double
The Creativity & Aging Study

The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults
SPONSORS:

- National Endowment For The Arts (NEA) (Lead Sponsor)
- Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, DHHS
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), NIH
- AARP/National Retired Teachers Association
- Stella & Charles Guttman Foundation, NYC
- International Foundation for Music Research
Primary Investigator:
Gene D. Cohen, M.D., Ph.D.

Coordinating Site:
The Center on Aging, Health & Humanities,
The George Washington University (GW)

The study was administered through a cooperative agreement of the National Endowment for the Arts with GW.
PARTICIPATING SITES:

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA), Brooklyn, New York
Project Director: Susan Perlstein

Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts (CEYA)
Institute on Aging, San Francisco, California
Project Director: Jeff Chapline, MFA

The Levine School of Music, Washington, DC
Project Director: Jeanne Kelly
Measuring the impact of community-based art programs on the general health, mental health & social activities of older persons

No previous study of this nature using an experimental design had been carried out

Results reveal strikingly positive differences between those involved in participatory art programs as compared to a very well matched control group
This study builds upon two major bodies of gerontologic research:
(1) Sense of Mastery and Control and
(2) Social Engagement.
Positive Impact Of Mental & Social Stimulation

- Challenging Your Mind
  - Enhances Brain Reserve
- Sense of Control/Mastery
  - Promotes Overall Health
- Interpersonal Engagement
  - Promotes Overall Health
Mind/Body Connections
Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)

MIND ----> BRAIN ----> IMMUNE SYSTEM

Increased Production of T Cells & NK Cells
Simultaneous Bilateral Brain Involvement

HAROLD MODEL: Hemispheric Asymmetry Reduction in Older Adults:
With Aging, Art is *like* Chocolate to the Brain
Psychological Growth
The Liberation Phase

The New Senior Moment

• If Not Now, When?
• Why Not?
• What Can They Do To Me?
Given that the average age of the subjects was 80—greater than life expectancy in the U.S.—one would generally consider interventions in this age group successful if there was less decline than expected.
Major Findings *In Brief*

At the Start, The Art Groups and the Controls Were Comparable on All Major Measures

- The Art Groups improved in health; Controls declined
- Compared to the Controls, the Art Groups
  — used less medication
  — had fewer doctor visits
- Compared to the Controls, the Art Groups did better on
  — the Depression Scale
  — the Loneliness Scale
  — the Morale Scale
- The Art Groups had an increase in activities, while the controls experienced a decline in activities
101 year old poet

NYC

Camaraderie

"In this group, we really learn to appreciate each other."
- Herbert, Writing from Life Experience (ESTA)
Morningside Retirement Health Services
"This is my first time as an artist! Before one year ago, I only knew work."

- Antonia, Living History Visual Arts (ESTA)
  Carver House Senior Center
"I make my wife something beautiful every week. This class saved my marriage."

- Tito, Living History Visual Arts (ESTA)
  Carver House Senior Center
Portraiture Class
San Francisco
Individual Mastery
San Francisco
Senior Singers Chorale

At The Millennium Stage Of The Kennedy Center
Audience For The Senior Singers’ Chorale
Community-based art programs run by professional artists have powerful positive effects.

They point to true health promotion and disease prevention effects.

They reveal a positive impact on maintaining independence and on reducing dependency.
Conclusions

These community-based cultural programs for older adults appear to be reducing risk factors that drive the need for long-term care.
Why arts and aging?

- Research shows that arts create healthy aging through mastery and social engagement.
- People are living longer and healthier lives with meaning and purpose.
- Embrace the moment! Creativity Matters.
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The National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA)  
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NCCA is a non-profit organization affiliated with George Washington University serving over 2500 members worldwide.