Dementia is defined as a group of symptoms which have significant influence on various cognitive processes linked to memory, thinking and problem solving abilities. As a result, patients who are diagnosed with dementia experience constant distress which interferes with their lives.

The primary cause of dementia is the damage or loss of nerve cells and their connections in the brain. Due to the fact that there can be different areas of the brain which are affected by the damage, the effect from dementia and its symptoms can be different.

Dementia symptoms are very individual, and can vary depending on the cause. However, there are some common visible symptoms which can be divided into two main groups:

1. Cognitive symptoms:
   a. memory loss which is noticed by family members or friends;
   b. problems linked to communication and decreased ability to find appropriate words;
   c. decreased visual and spatial abilities, for instance, getting lost when a patient with dementia drives;
   d. problems linked to reasoning and problem-solving abilities;
   e. decreased ability to handle complex tasks;
   f. decreased ability to plan and organize something;
   g. problems linked to coordination and decreased motor abilities;
   h. disorientation and confusion

2. Psychological symptoms:
   a. changes linked to personality characteristics;
   b. depression;
   c. anxiety;
   d. paranoia;
   e. inappropriate behaviours;
   f. agitation;
   g. hallucinations.

There are a lot of factors which have significant impact on the developing of dementia:

1. age (the risk of developing dementia after age 65 increases);
2. family history;
3. Down syndrome;
4. poor diet and lack of exercise (despite the fact that still there is no special diet which reduces the risk of developing dementia, it was demonstrated that the amount
of people diagnosed with dementia and followed unhealthy diet was more than the amount of people who had dementia and followed healthy diet, such as Mediterranean-style diet);

5. drinking large amounts of alcohol;
6. cardiovascular risk factors (researchers have demonstrated that there is a relationship between developing of dementia and high blood pressure and high level of cholesterol);
7. depression;
8. diabetes;
9. smoking;
10. vitamin and nutritional deficiencies (studies showed that the decreased levels of vitamins D, B6 and B12 are linked to the increased risk of developing of dementia);

Despite the wide range of factors which have significant influence on the development of dementia, researches have shown that there are a lot of ways which can be used in order to prevent developing of this illness, such as regular physical and social activities, getting enough vitamins, quitting smoking and alcohol use, maintaining a healthy diet and getting enough sleep.

In addition, at the moment there are more studies which focus on the positive effect of art-therapy on the symptoms expressed in case of dementia. It was demonstrated that different art interventions, including art, dance, music, singing, and creative writing have potential positive effects on dementia and can improve some characteristics linked to this illness, including well-being, quality of life, some cognitive functions, and communication.

According to the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), art therapy is defined as a special field of psychology linked to mental health. Using creative processes patients start to think about their emotions, self-awareness, behaviours, additions. In addition, patients who use art therapy can improve their social skills, increase the overall level of self-esteem and decrease the level of anxiety.

The biological basement of art therapy is associated with brain lateralization which means that the left part of the brain is responsible for logic thinking, language, writing, and reasoning, and on the other hand, the right part of the brain is responsible for different creative processes, such as drawing, music creation, and emotions. As it was already mentioned, patients who are diagnosed with dementia have problems linked to thinking abilities and have difficulties in expressing their feelings verbally. However, visual and motor skills are not so impaired, and that gives them an advantage to express their emotions using lines, shapes, and different colours.

There is a relationship between dementia and decreased cognitive abilities in patients with dementia. As a result they have problems with expressing their negative emotions verbally which means that they can be depressed and anxious more compared to people who are not diagnosed with dementia. Art therapy helps patients to express their negative emotions and alleviate behavioral and psychological symptoms using graphics. Additionally, the creation of art stimulates the temporal lobe, which influences object recognition and accurate expression using language, and the parietal lobe, which is linked to the spatial position of objects and controls motor functions of the hand. Moreover, the hand-brain interaction has the influence on the maintenance and development of motor skills and coordination, and increases the ability of colour, shape, space, and proportion perception by the brain.

The cognitive function of patients who are diagnosed with dementia declines significantly and progressively. Art therapy is a very complex intervention using which attention, verbal skills and orientation can be improved due to the fact that patients are involved in creating art processes. Additionally, It is very important to mention that
Art therapy must include more elements in order to have more improvement of cognitive ability.

It was demonstrated that approximately 70-90% of patients who are diagnosed with dementia experience restlessness, anger, depression, anxiety, sadness and other behavioral and psychological symptoms as the disease progresses. As a result, it has a significant impact on their quality of life and their caregivers’ quality of life leading to burden. Some studies showed that the dysfunction of the right cerebral hemisphere can influence the further abnormal emotional activity in patients. Art therapy can improve mood regulation via the effect which it has on the right cerebral hemisphere. In addition, a safe and comfortable place for art therapy can help in expressing themselves and bringing joy. Moreover, the level of self-control and quality of life increases in cases of dementia.

Art therapy helps patients with dementia and their caregivers to understand their inner world better, and as a result promote communication, especially in case of group art therapy in which both patients and caregivers take part. It was found that patients with different severity of symptoms expression could strengthen their sense of group belonging and improve their social skills (namely, patients with dementia started to use more body language and eye contact was more frequent) after the course of group art therapy.

In addition, it was demonstrated that art therapy has a positive effect on caregivers of patients with dementia as well. For example, caregivers experience difficulties in expressing their needs, and as a result their communication is impaired. However, using group art therapy can help them to express all their needs. Additionally, if the caregivers also take part in therapy, they provide emotional support to patients, and decrease the level of distress simultaneously.

According to the study done by Windle and colleagues (Windle et al., 2017), patients who were diagnosed with dementia showed increase in the following aspects: attention, self-esteem, pleasure. At the same time, they demonstrated decreases in the following factors: negative affect and experiencing of sadness. Additionally, they noticed that the effect from visual arts did not depend on the level of impairments. Moreover, scientists predicted that different art programs can be used in order to improve communication skills for patients with dementia who are at hospitals.

To sum up, it can be said that art therapy has an influence on some cognitive functions (such as attention and orientation) in case dementia. In addition, it was demonstrated that after the course of art therapy the levels of some behavioural, psychological symptoms and burden have decreased, and at the same time the level of social skills has increased.

However, it is very important to mention that due to the limited number of related studies, there is no concrete information related to the duration and frequency of art therapy, and how the different amount of art therapy sessions, their duration and intensity influence symptoms expressed in case of patients diagnosed with dementia.

Based on these findings, it can be said that individualized intervention programs using art therapy can be developed in order to improve the cognitive functions of patients with dementia, reduce their behavioral and psychological symptoms, and as a result increase their level of quality of life.

References:


ДОСЛУХАЮЧИСЬ ДО РОЗПОВІДЕЙ: НАРАТИВНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ У СОЦІАЛЬНІЙ РОБОТІ

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Репертуар дослідницьких стратегій у сучасній соціальний роботі постійно розширюється [4]. Популярною стратегією досліджень у соціальній роботі став наративний (англ. narrative – оповідь, від лат. narrare – розповідати, пояснювати) аналіз, який ґрунтується на сюжетному, оповідальному характері знання. Ця розвідка – на основі системного аналізу літератури – має на меті схарактеризувати специфіку наративних досліджень і основні підходи до наративного аналізу.

«Наратив» (оповідальний текст) можна визначити як спосіб репрезентації минулого досвіду за допомогою послідовності впорядкованих речень, що передають часову послідовність подій [10]. Дж. Фелан і П. Рабіновіц описують це як «хтось комусь повідомляє, з певної нагоди і з певними цілями, що з кимось щось трапилося» [8, с. 3], тобто як багатоцільовий зв’язок із залученням того, хто розповідає, розповіді з певної нагоди і аудиторії. Дослідники зазначають, що наратив інколи намагаються звести до певної особистої історії, розповіді (англ. story), однак найважливішим, на їхню думку, є сприйняття цієї історії та стосунків, власне, історія – це лише сюжет, який оповідається, аби донести певну суть [6]. При цьому спід взяти до уваги, що події, про які веде мову оповідач, відбираються, організовуються, пов’язуються та опікуються як значущі для певної аудиторії.

Нарешті представники різних наукових галузей неоднокозво трактують поняття «наратив». У соціальній історії та антропології наратив може стосуватися цілої історії життя, витканої з ниток інтер’ю, спостережень та документів. У соціолінгвістиці та інших сферах концепція наративу обмежена,