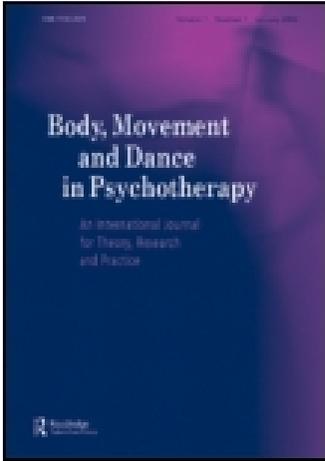


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Whole person healthcare: volume 3, The arts and health

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Whole person healthcare: Volume 3, The arts and health, edited by Ilene A. Serlin, Westport, CT, Praeger, 2007, 335 pp., US\$124.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-275-99234-7

Whole person health care ‘integrates the best of medical and psychological practices into a biopsychosocialspiritual model where the psychology of the whole person integrates behavior, cognition and consciousness body, mind and spirit’ (p. xviii). This quote from the introduction by Ilene Serlin underscores a main theme in the book: not fragmenting the body – but considering it as a whole. The interrelationship between mind and body is well accepted today (Rossi, 1986) and the importance of processing emotions as a healing factor is one part of the psychoneuroimmunological model. Constructive emotional expression (Pert, 1997) has been shown to significantly increase immune function and also contribute to other positive health outcomes. This is certainly a part of the holistic view we all have to bear in mind when working with whole person healthcare and one solution can be found in the arts.

This is the third and final volume in a three-volume series. Each contribution uses a transdisciplinary perspective regarding the arts. Volume 1 is on Humanizing Healthcare and Volume 2 on Psychology, Spirituality, and Healthcare. The third

volume is on The Arts and Health in 14 chapters. These are 1: Application of Art to Health, 2: History of the Arts and Health across Cultures, 3: The Development of the Contemporary International Arts in Healthcare Field, 4: The Hospital Artists in Residence Programs: Narratives of Healing, 5: The Science of Creativity and Health, 6: Theory and Practices of Art Therapies: Whole Person Integrative Approaches to Healthcare, 7: Dance/Movement Therapy for the Whole Person, 8: Drama Therapy: Past, Present and Future, 9: Poetry Therapy: Reclamation of Deep Language, 10: Spirituality; Hope and Music Therapy in Palliative Care, 11: Expressive Dance, Writing; Trauma, and Health: When Words Have a Body, 12: Art Therapy and the Soul, 13: Using the Art to Work with Stress and Trauma in the Israeli Context, and 14: More than Words: Bringing the Arts into Clinical Psychology Training. Each chapter concludes with a Tool Kit with basic principles of clinical practice (except for Chapters 10 and 13).

In the Foreword, Dean Ornish, MD, questions how to make medicine more sustainable and cost-effective. High-tech medicine is not enough to prolong life with high life quality. Other deeper factors are needed to reach maintenance and sustainability in future health care. David Spiegel, MD, promotes the idea of integrative treatments, because they make people feel more in control compared to mainstream medical care. Believing, self-participation and self-control can also heal. 'Whole person healthcare' defines 'integrative' as treatment reflecting the complex interaction of mental, physical and spiritual dimensions of both illness and health.

The book emphasises that integrative health care addresses a three-fold crisis in our medical system where the consumer, the physician and the health-care model are disillusioned and broken. As noted by Ilene Serlin, 'an integrative whole person approach is urgent as we face ever-more complex health issues' (p. xix). One aim with all three of the books is to reach practitioners who already utilise integrative health care without quality control. However, to integrate integrative knowledge into the practice of health care, it is important to integrate one's own body and mind as a care giver. It is important to prepare oneself, and the series fails to provide the reader knowledge and training in this area.

I want to highlight Chapter 2 by Jill Sonke-Henderson's, presenting 'History of the arts and health across cultures', with a grounded deep knowledge and creative rhythm, which I would recommend everybody working in healthcare to read. This chapter is a must for a deeper understanding of why art is important to everybody. Jill Sonke-Henderson's and Rusti Brandman's Chapter 4, 'The hospital artists in residence programs: narratives of healing' is also highly recommended; it gives specific examples and increases our understanding of the 'magic' of the arts. The authors point out the 'essential space within a hospital where one's search for life's meaning is intensified', and the need to provide this space. They also point out the difference between artists and medical staff where the relationship is not 'clinical in the medical sense' (p. 72). I think it is a key factor for the patient to have a relationship outside the medical staff, in order to reach this essential space of meaning.

Another relevant factor noted in Chapter 5 by Jeffrey Evans is creativity in the context of arts in health care. 'Creative activities promote harmony or coherence

between person and the world' (p. 87) and 'creative activities build abilities, or competencies that promote self-efficacy and defeat boredom and depression' (p. 87). The author describes the relation between creativity and immune system function, markers of physical and mental health. He also argues that people in general have creative potential and that creativity is a process throughout all ages in life. Creative self-expression organises the person with reference to the world of experience and creates coherence between the person and the world. I think it is important to present more studies like this one regarding the mechanisms involved in creative art acts and how this can heal the immune system.

Chapters 6 to 12 focus on different arts therapies and how they can be used to promote health, provide access to multiple modes of intelligence and expand consciousness. In Chapter 11, a combination of dance and writing is presented where the importance of 'initially using movements to access feeling states (which) may allow or enhance language processing' (p. 225). This is in my view a key factor in all learning processes. In general, it may have been easier to read and compare the different arts therapy methods described in Chapters 6 to 12 had they used the same framework.

Chapter 13 is the only chapter that provides a non-US perspective on whole person healthcare. As Paul Camic points out from a clinical psychological perspective in Chapter 14, the arts can 'make sub symbolic emotional content more accessible' (p. 278) and 'educators should understand the evolutionary importance of the arts to human development' (p. 278).

The book leaves out two important aspects of whole person healthcare: its value and advantages in terms of improved health and cost effectiveness in providing care. The book presents a resilience thinking framework but the implied benefits to society at large are missing. Another important aspect treated only marginally in the text is the altruistic and empathic perspective of mind and body and the long term effects of applying a holistic view within all healthcare connections. A desired altruistic behaviour vis à vis caregiver and patient might be as important as a scientific medical treatment and might therefore be more clearly explained in the text. As pointed out in Chapter 4, 'a patient's perception of caregiver empathy has been shown to affect emotional health symptoms resolution and health outcomes' (p. 75). This underscores the need to develop more empathic methods within all health care systems.

The value of art is difficult to capture using quantitative measurements and often qualitative research, or at least a combination of both, is more appropriate. David Aldridge notes this, in Chapter 10, concerning the importance of bringing the non materialistic meaning into our research focus. In the future hopefully combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study (triangulation, Kaplan, 2001) will be applied more often within arts therapy research. One problem might be that scientists today have a tendency to deselect well working arts therapies due to strict and narrow evidence criteria.

The common grounds for creative therapies run as a red thread throughout the book. This can be perceived as somewhat repetitive and makes it hard to distinguish the different modalities from one another. On the other hand, it is important to understand the commonalities between them, and interesting to read about studies

that have shown that two modalities are better than one (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999).

Art is ubiquitous in all life circumstances, so anyone seeking a broader and more meaningful understanding of the relationship between art and life quality may benefit from this book. The purpose behind using various forms of artistic expression are similar in every different form of therapy; but reach different inner conscious channels or doors. What distinguishes the different art forms from each other? Matching the right patient with the right arts modality is a challenge. If we can learn to understand which door to the inner world leads to healing we could save many hours in therapy. The authors still struggle with the challenge of how to identify the 'right' type of creative arts treatment for a given individual. As a reader of the book, I have not come to a conclusion concerning which modality is appropriate for a certain patient. I also hope that all authors read all chapters in the book and bear in mind that 'the simpler, the deeper' as taught by Shaun McNiff's excellent Chapter 12: 'Art therapy and the soul'.

When facing mortality we tend to seek symbols, because we do not know what will come. The arts can bear these deep questions and can transform meaninglessness to meaning. Art can provide an adaptive mechanism for coping with this uncertainty – the space between the known and the unknown. As mentioned in Chapter 2 by Jill Sonke-Henderson, symbols were created early in mankind's history as a way to communicate meaning before we had words. It reminds me of how crucial our symbols still can be, to enhance and deepen our communication of meaning. Art and creativity are in that sense not only a health care issue, but rather an issue for our universal system. Art can more easily be universally accessible.

This book argues that if we understand the use of the powerful mechanisms within art, the value of our whole society would increase. Every human is an artist and can therefore heal. Art reflects every single part of the world we live in and know. Even though we don't know exactly what makes art 'healthy,' it has been working for more than 40,000 years. So, the healing agent seems to be art itself.

Therefore, I think that the audience for this book should not be restricted to established health care workers and artists, or to patients or their relatives. It can also be appropriate as a self-care instruction book to everybody who is interested in art as a healing source in everyday life. The book also fits very well into the literature on 'body, movement and dance in psychotherapy' not only because a majority of the authors are working close to this field, but also because the message from the book is a movement of healing which starts in the body. The tone and style of the book makes it accessible to a broad audience. The references are unfortunately mostly representative of the 1990s, with the notable exception of the recent contributions of Rusti Brandman in Chapter 3. Actual links between creative arts and neuroscience are therefore not sufficiently addressed in the texts. Dance movement psychotherapy (DMT) is in my view well suited to represent the integrative whole person healthcare treatment which is presented in the book. This integrative view of the body in a cultural and social body context is

appropriate for DMT as it can lead to developing treatments that involve all modalities (music, drama, poetry and drawing) together. We can as DMT's rediscover our modern and yet ancient roles as proud healers of the mind body and spirit because:

- DMT enhances emotional flexibility and inner resources;
- DMT creates self expression which promotes mental health;
- DMT translates a felt correspondence between internal and external structures;
- DMT leads to a coherence between me and the world.

Once again, we know that the coherence between the self and the world has neuropsychological correlations, in particular related to tension and stress. In DMT we create coherence between the body's experiences and ourselves. This creative and healing act can enhance health in a completely new health care context and therefore it may be our task to convey this knowledge to other health care givers.

A strong part of the book is the recommendation of websites for further information about art and health in several different settings. Another important part is the research in psychoneuroimmunology which may trigger our understanding of the healing mechanisms within art. The presented tool kits are also a good aid for the reader and summarise key points from the texts.

The book could benefit from a more diverse group of authors representing arts therapists from other countries and cultures. The Israeli context is the only one outside the US. The selection of writers is perhaps therefore not representative to all whole person health care.

The urgent need for a more efficient utilisation of services within the US health care system is mentioned by Ilene Serlin. This is applicable to other countries outside US. She notes the need for communication between professionals where combinations of traditions and complementary practices are developed – so they can 'rediscover their modern yet ancient roles as healers of the mind, body and spirit' (p. xxii). As mentioned in the text: 'good health requires considerably more than access to quality medical care' (p. 283). Since we have more sensations than words, we need art to fill this gap with meaning.

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