

Effectiveness of Using Art Therapy as an Intervention to Increase the Psychological Comfort of Hospitalized Children with Cancer

Hsiu-Mei Liu¹, Chi-Hung Li², Huei-Ling Chen³
RN¹; Social workers²; Religious counselors³
MacKay Children's Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan

Objective

Children with cancer may require long-term hospitalization and several courses of treatment, during which their activity space may be restricted in order to prevent infection. Such restrictions influence their interactions with the outside world and may exert psychosocial effects in the long run. Art therapy as an intervention can serve as a channel for such child patients to express their emotions. Moreover, the sense of accomplishment gained from completing artworks and opportunities for peer interaction may alleviate the psychological discomfort caused by the disease.

Methods

Based on specific Taiwanese festivals, this study designed art therapy activities for hospitalized children with cancer. The completed artworks were photographed as tokens of remembrance, and the children could keep the artworks for themselves or display them in the display window of their hospital ward specifically designed for the children. To encourage the children, the photographs were also uploaded to Facebook upon their family's consent.

Results

A total of 6 activities for 48 child patients were conducted in 2018. Thirty-two children reported a distress thermometer score greater or equal to 5 (a high score indicating a high distress level) on the day before the activity. The number of children with such a score was reduced to 7 after the activity. On average, the satisfaction scores of the child patients and their family members also improved from 78.4 to 97.8.



Chinese New Year/
red envelopes



Lantern Festival/
jewelry out of
polymer clay



Children's Day/
reusable bags



the Mid-Autumn Festival/
storage boxes using decoupage



Father's Day/
greeting cards



Christmas/
pen holders out
of paper clay



Conclusion

The results show that art therapy activities can alleviate the negative emotions experienced by child patients during hospitalization and treatment and improve peer interaction, in turn provide psychological comfort to children with cancer.

