European Collaboration of Healthcare and Art with Focus on Social Inclusion and Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the health benefits, for healthcare service users with various disabilities, of participating in a European collaborative art project. The first section describes the organisations involved and the background for the project. The findings – based on evaluations, testimonies and interviews – suggest that the project promoted wellbeing; stimulated a changed notion of social identity; and also contributed to social engagement and inclusion. The second section starts with considering the role of the Community Learning Programme at Tate Modern Gallery in delivering inclusive workshops, and evaluates it with respect to service users’ needs; this section concludes by questioning the social role of galleries and museums and explores how these could contribute significantly to the health and wellbeing of local communities by promoting arts and health programmes.

Keywords: Art Participation, Disability, Gallery, Health, Identity, Mental Health, Museum, Service Users, Wellbeing

METHODOLOGY

Section one will provide a background context to the In Between Out project and the participating organisations and will examine the benefits for the participating service users based on interviews, testimonies and project evaluation reports. Section two will examine the role of Tate Modern Gallery’s Community Learning workshop in relation to the project and how Tate Modern conducted the evaluation of the workshop. Furthermore, the article will consider the current and future role of museum and galleries in relation to health promotion. Finally, the article will conclude by analysing the findings.

Section 1: The European Collaboration

Introduction

Wide research demonstrates that art participation (including music, literature, drama and visual arts) can have positive therapeutic outcomes for people with both physical and mental health problems including dementia,
anxiety, depression, psychosis and substance misuse (NEF, 2009; White, 2009; Wolf & Wolf, 2011; ACE, 2012). It is regularly used in health settings in Britain, Ireland, Australia, Canada and the USA (Wikoff, 2004; White, 2009; ACI, 2010), and over the past decades, success has encouraged ever-wider use. In the countries just mentioned, it is now commonplace to find arts programmes within hospitals and in other health care settings such as day-care centres, out-patient wards, hospices and homes for the elderly (Stickley & Hui, 2012). Indeed, already in 2004, 48 per cent of US hospitals had established arts programmes (Wikoff, 2004), and in Britain a large proportion of hospitals have ad hoc art activities as well as art departments (Invest to Save, 2011).

**Participating Organisations**

Between 2010 and 2012, GAIA Academy\(^1\) from Denmark, the Other Side Gallery\(^2\) from Britain, and Art Cru Galerie\(^3\) and Pinel\(^4\) from Germany participated in a collaborative project.\(^5\) All the partner organisations worked with disabled service users within arts and community setting. The organisations also had comparable therapeutic methods and artistic practices with a common focus of promoting artwork of disabled service users. However, the four organisations had various objectives; approaches to their cultural environment; and capabilities to provide opportunities for service users.

The collaboration consisted of a visit to each organisation, amounting to four visits in total. 62 people participated, including 18 members of staff. More service users participated in the project-related activities at national level (activities in the partners home country) but did not partake in the visits due to restriction in project funding. All participants were either Danish, English or German adults, between 20 and 65 years of age, with a range of physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health problems. There were 24 male and 20 female service users.

- **GAIA Academy**: Is based at the GAIA Museum in Randers, Denmark. The Academy’s art programme has a “person-centred approach” aimed at the specific target group of 16 to 24 year olds with special educational needs. It offers an arts and culture-focused programme with the ethos that art participation increases the wellbeing of the whole person. The pedagogical approach focuses on wellbeing and social development, based on the theory that using and understanding art is a means of expression.

- **The Other Side Gallery**: In London aims to address gaps in provision for people with various mental and physical disabilities. It is dedicated to the exhibition, promotion and sale of artwork from a community of people who generally find it hard to interact with mainstream society due to various disabilities. The most significant activity of the Other Side Gallery is the outreach programme, which enables collaboration with other arts initiatives in settings including hospitals, day care centres, old people’s homes and hostels for the homeless.

- **Art Cru Galerie**: A gallery in Berlin, exhibiting outsider art and conducts art workshops for disabled people. The central activities are to support and develop health by providing opportunities in a social context. Service delivery is supported by various member associations such as art ateliers and therapeutic institutes.

- **Pinel**: In Berlin, is an initiative for people with mental health problems offering facilities such as an open art studio darkroom for photographic development, video design,
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