

Taking a closer look: A review of ANZJAT publications 2006-2011

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Abstract

This article explores the articles published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Arts Therapy (ANZJAT)* between the years 2006-2011. The inquiry was conducted using a mixed-methods analysis of 39 articles published across six journal issues. The investigation drew upon the method used by Metzler (2008) in her study of research published in *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*. The findings offer a new lens for reflecting on the development of arts therapy practice and research in the Australia/New Zealand region over these years. The study identified the need for more systematic approaches to research, an expanded range of research skills, a regionally-specific research agenda, and an arts therapy-specific evaluation strategy.

Keywords

Arts therapy, research, professional identity

To develop a complete mind:

Study the art of science;

Study the science of art.

Learn how to see.

Realize that everything connects to everything else.

Leonardo Da Vinci

(as cited in Brown, 1997, p.1)

Introduction

Understandings of the discipline of arts therapy vary across the health sector, even amongst mental health professionals. Like many arts therapists, the authors of this paper have encountered misconceptions about professional practice and efficacy across a range of professional domains as well as in the public realm. For example, one of the authors noted that a group of misinformed mental health professionals considered arts therapy to be a practice which should only be used with people who were experiencing psychotic states or were low-functioning. High functioning clients, in this view, were believed to benefit more so from verbal therapies.

This common misconception of arts therapy underpinned the impetus for the current study, which looked at how we communicate about this discipline, through the journal *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Arts Therapy (ANZJAT)*, to the mental and general healthcare communities in the local regional context. The study has identified the need for ongoing education of colleagues and the community to distinguish the efficacy and clinical application of arts therapy, and to further its potential to be regarded as a primary intervention (Westwood, 2010).

Literature review

Scholarly journals in arts therapy

The growth of scholarly journals in arts therapy has reflected the development of the discipline globally (www.anzata.org). The first English language journal dedicated exclusively to art therapy was published in 1961 in the USA under the title *The Bulletin of Art Therapy* (Rubin, 1998). Although over the ensuing years the title and form of that journal have altered,