

anzjat

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARTS THERAPY

Editorial team

Editors Sheridan Linnell and Catherine Camden-Pratt
Journal Coordinator and Editorial Assistant Jill Segedin
Copy Editors Constance Ellwood and Belinda Nemeč
Proofreaders Rigel Sorzano and Belinda Nemeč
Research Sub-committee Chair Kirsten Meyer

International advisors

Andrea Gilroy, Ronald P.M.H. Lay, Jordan Potash

Peer review panel

Jan Allen, Annette Coulter, Karen Daniel, Jo Davies, Claire Edwards, Cornelia Elbrecht, Bettina Evans, Patricia Fenner, Esther Fitzpatrick, Fiona Gardner, Andrea Gilroy, Deborah Green, Jennie Halliday, Rainbow Ho, Jo Kelly, Adrian Lania, San Leenstra, Amanda Levey, Annetta Mallon, Shaun McNiff, Kirsten Meyer, Julia Meyerowitz-Katz, Nikki O'Connor, Jean Parkinson, Radhika Santhanam-Martin, Mariana Torkington, Carla van Laar, Jill Westwood, Sue Wildman, Daniel Wong.

The editorial team wishes to thank those members of the Peer Review Panel and others who generously contributed their time and expertise to the peer review of this edition of *ANZJAT*.

Published by Australian and New Zealand Arts Therapy Association
ABN 63 072 954 388
PO Box 303 Glebe, NSW 2037, Australia
www.anzata.org

© Australian and New Zealand Journal of Arts Therapy, 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher. The publisher makes no representation or warranty that the information contained in articles is accurate, nor accepts liability or responsibility for any action arising out of information contained in this journal.

ISSN: 1833-9948

Design and production Jill Segedin

Printing McCollams, Auckland, New Zealand and Documents On Call, Melbourne, Australia

Painting a picture of the lived workplace experiences of nine Victorian art therapists

Annie Armour

Dr Patricia Fenner *La Trobe University, Melbourne*

Katie Buckley *La Trobe University, Melbourne, and the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne*

Abstract

This paper discusses a study that explored the impact on art therapy practice of structural and organisational factors. The study employed single, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with nine professionally registered art therapists working in the health sector in Victoria. The interview data were analysed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method. A multi-layered thematic reduction process produced five overarching themes: key social characteristics of the workplace; perceptions and misconceptions of art therapy in the workplace; the role of the structural and material setting; education, training, and clinical supervision specific to the organisational setting; and how policy supports or hinders optimal practice. The paper presents a small, yet indicative, sample of the lived workplace experiences of art therapists in Victoria.

Keywords

Art therapy, workplace, therapist, working conditions, health service management.

Introduction

Art therapy is a relatively new therapeutic practice attracting increasing attention amongst healthcare providers, clients, and consumers of diverse health services across Australia and New Zealand, and throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Recognised by the Australian Government as a profession in 2006 (Kelly, 2013), art therapy, along with some other non-psychology practices, is yet to be included amongst occupations that attract government rebates (ANZATA, 2015; King, O'Brien, & Schofield, 2008). Broad-scale consensus that the field requires a more sophisticated evidence base has stimulated an increasing volume and range of research endeavours, both locally and abroad (Fenner, Rumbold, Rumbold, Robinson, & Harpur, 2012).

Over the past 30 years, in Australia alone, hundreds of art and arts therapists have trained at Master's degree level and

have found employment within community, educational and clinical domains. In light of this groundswell uptake of the art/s therapies within urban and some regional centres, a better-informed understanding of the working contexts of art therapists is timely. This paper attempts to contribute to what we know about the workplace experiences of art therapists professionally engaged in this rapidly expanding field; in particular it looks at therapists' understandings of the impact of structural and organisational factors on optimal practice. The study took place within the state of Victoria in Australia, with most attention placed on the experiences of therapists working in Melbourne. The project constituted the research component of an honours degree in health sciences undertaken by the lead author, under supervision of the second and third co-authors at La Trobe University (Department of Public Health). Not an art therapist herself, the lead author's personal experience of creative