Effectiveness Studies

Many employers of dance/movement therapists are curious about its effectiveness. Effectiveness studies are a rigorous and valuable kind of research that can be realistically conducted in clinical settings. Singal, Higgins and Waljee described them this way: “Effectiveness studies (also known as pragmatic studies) examine interventions under circumstances that more closely approach real-world practice, with more heterogeneous patient populations, less-standardized treatment protocols, and delivery in routine clinical settings. Effectiveness studies may also use a RCT [randomized controlled trial] design; however, the intervention is more often compared with usual care, rather than placebo … Although effectiveness studies sacrifice some internal validity, they have higher external validity than efficacy studies” (2014, “Study Design”).

In contrast, systematic reviews examine and evaluate a body of research to determine the effectiveness of an intervention or practice. “A review earns the adjective systematic if it is based on a clearly formulated question, identifies relevant studies, appraises their quality and summarizes the evidence by use of explicit methodology” (Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen & Antes, 2003, p. 118). The Cochrane Collaboration is an organization that conducts systematic reviews and evaluates the review work of others.

Meta-analysis is the “use of statistical methods for exploring differences between studies and combining their effects.” (Khan, et.al, 2003, p. 118). Systematic reviews often employ meta-analyses.

In order to become an evidence-based practice, dance/movement therapy, like other health services, must integrate “the best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values” (Sackett, Strauss, Richardson, Rosenberg & Haynes, 2000, p.1).

What is the “best research evidence”? That question has been answered in medicine and related fields through the development of what is called levels of evidence, sometimes represented visually in the form of a pyramid (shown below) that ranks research by how strongly it meets certain criteria. Those studies that meet the criteria near the top of the pyramid represent the best research evidence. (Source: http://consultgerinn.org/evidence-based_practice)
The Effectives of Dance/Movement Therapy

To meet the stated needs of its members, the ADTA has created a document about research that demonstrates the effectiveness of dance/movement therapy. This helpful document, entitled “Brief Summary of Research on the Effectiveness of Dance/Movement Therapy” can be found in full [here](#). The following is an excerpt:
Here we present four systematic reviews of dance/movement therapy effectiveness, each of which includes meta-analysis:

Two independent reviews:


Thirteen studies of 469 participants total, analyzed for anxiety, self-concept, body awareness, and separately for all psychiatric patients. **Finding:** Effect size values were comparable to those published for CBT, at the time.


An update of Cruz and Sabers, using 23 studies of 1078 participants total. **Findings as excerpted from the Abstract, with emphasis added:** “Results suggest that DMT and dance are effective for increasing quality of life and decreasing clinical symptoms such as depression and anxiety. Positive effects were also found on the increase of subjective well-being, positive mood, affect, and body image.” © 2013 Elsevier Ltd.

Two reviews for the Cochrane Collaboration of Systematic Reviews:


**Findings:** Three randomized controlled trials, of 130 participants total, SMD of -7.3 favoring the DMT intervention for reduced depression. In review, with publication expected before the end of 2014.


**Findings:** Two randomized controlled trials of 69 participants total. M-A of body image outcomes possible but SMD of -.13 did not find support for an effect.
This systematic review is currently (August 2014) being updated (by Bradt, Goodill & Shim) with new studies included.

References for this page:


Are you interested in knowing more about evidence-based practice? Read these related articles:


