

THE ADVANTAGES OF “DANCE-GROUP” FOR PSYCHOTIC PATIENTS

Romina Tavormina¹, Maurilio Giuseppe Maria Tavormina² & Eugenio Nemoianni²

¹*Social cooperative “Saint Lucia” of Castellammare di Stabia, Naples, Italy*

²*Mental Health Department, Operative Unit of Mental Health of Torre del Greco, Naples, Italy*

SUMMARY

Psychosocial rehabilitation and in particular group dances allow the recovery of lost or compromised ability of patients with mental illness, and they facilitate their reintegration into the social context. The dance group has enabled users of the Day Centre of the Unit of Mental Health Torre del Greco ASL NA 3 south to achieve the objectives of rehabilitation such as: taking care of themselves, of their bodies and their interests, improving self-esteem, the management of pathological emotions, socialization and integration, overcoming the psychotic closing and relational isolation. In particular, patients with schizophrenia, psychotic and mood disorders had a concrete benefit from such rehabilitation activities, facilitating interpersonal relationships, therapy compliance and significantly improved mood, quality of life, providing them with the rhythm and the security in their relationship with each other. The dance group and for some individuals, also psychotherapy and drug therapy, have facilitated social inclusion, improved the quality of life and cured their diseases. The work is carrying out in a group with patients, practitioners, family members, volunteers, social community workers, following the operating departmental protocols. Using the chorus group "Sing that you go" as an operational tool for psychosocial rehabilitation and therapeutic element we promote the psychological well-being and the enhancement of mood.

Key words: *dance-group – rehabilitation - therapeutic rehabilitation - psychotic patients*

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INTRODUCTION

Dance is vital and creative e man the sense of the body as a place of our addiction, as a place of our power, as a receptacle of the real world through the senses, as a projection of possible nergy. The function of dance consists in giving back to world through action. The dance, integrating body and soul all together, reaches its therapeutic role. It is independent from any kind of aesthetic discourse, to point directly to the content of the expression: through sound, our body relaxes in a sweet and harmonious motion, creating space, leaving out our deepest emotions, freeing us from somatization, from expressive blocks and everyday stress. The therapy also gets into the rhythm of the sound and externalizes it with the body. The use of dance as a therapeutic ritual dates back to the dawn of human history. We remember the shamans and medicine men who led the ritual Therapeutic dances or bode well dance at the tribal communities in the world and in particular in the villages of the Native Americans. But the dance therapy as a technique for improving the self, releasing the psychological barriers, by working through the body, is a relatively recent technique, as well as is the activity of the dance-therapist. The American Dance Therapy Association, founded in 1966, defines dance therapy as the psychotherapeutic use of movement. This technique, based on the assumption that mind and body are in constant mutual interaction, has been forming around the psychological and physiological concepts that highlight the relationship between body and psyche.

Dance-therapy is an alternative method of work in the context of each systematized theory of human behavior. It has an integrative function: it helps to reduce fragmentation, bizarre and forced gestures. It also determines the mobility and strengthens the body image developing the sense of identity. The patient, through the movement, expresses his interior reality. The dance work with psychotic individuals is very interesting, because their interior thought is difficult to bring out for their internal chaos. The psychotics were in fact prisoners of archaic experience: they do not distinguish the inside from the outside world, the imaginary from reality, themselves from the others. The methodology of the Dmt, in the treatment of psychosis, aims man towards autonomy understood as not only the achievement of bodily integrity but also the consciousness of separation from the other (Bellia 1995). Through dance in a groupal context, the psychotic patient does not only recover the relationship with his body trying to integrate new sensations in his psychic apparatus but he also experiences the relational dimension, recovering relationship with each other, coming out from his isolation. Starting from these premises and from the analysis of several works, made in the field of psychiatry, is born our study that shares its objectives with dance-therapy. These objectives are: facilitating the psycho-corporeal integration and the relational dimension in the psychotic through dance, introducing a new element that is the use of group and Caribbean dances as a therapeutic tool. This work is the product of a project of psychosocial rehabilitation, the group dance "Dance That You Go", which began in 2008 at the Day Centre of the 'Mental

Health Unit Torre del Greco (NA) DSM ASL NA 3 SUD (at the time ASL NA 5) and it is still going on. This project was born from the joint work between ASL and social cooperatives of Campania, and it aimed at the "Strengthening of Day Centres" of our territory for the activities of psychosocial rehabilitation.

The project is a work of doctors, nurses, psychologists from the Department of Mental Health and operators of social co-operatives, such as rehabilitation technicians, entertainers and social community, educators, psychologists, who are supporting the work of employees of the DSM, strengthening activities of the Day Centre.

METHODS

During the first phase of the project some meetings were held between the Head of the Day Centre, the specialists treating patients and their referrers, operators of cooperatives and nurses of the Department. After these, it is decided to develop a rehabilitative programme using dance group as a therapeutic tool of rehabilitation for users of the Day Centre.

Its objectives are:

- Recovering of the psycho-social capacity lost and skills compromised by mental illness;
- Increasing the strengths and overcoming the difficulties of psychiatric patients;
- Improving the quality of life, enhancing the care for depression and mood disorders in general, beyond the sphere of schizophrenic disorders, in combination with traditional therapies;
- The increase and the improvement of relations, interpersonal relations and the reintegration of users in the social context.

Using the guidelines of the departmental Day Centres the strengths and weaknesses of users have been assessed, as well as their psychological problems and impaired abilities to improve. Using the motivations of patients to the dance within the rehabilitation project, and evaluating the therapeutic-rehabilitative opportunities, it was decided to include them in the dance group "Dance That You Go."

The recruitment of patients was carried out with the following operating modes:

- the referring psychiatrist sends the patients at the Day Center;
- the Diagnostic Evaluation of psychic difficulties, strengths, motivations of users were assessed in the initial interviews and the VADO (Morosini, 1998), a test of psycho-social rehabilitation was administered;
- team meetings between the Head of the Day Centre, the specialists treating patients and operators.;
- the entry of the patient in the group dance;

- registration of rehabilitation using a daily attendance sheet and transcription in the activity log of the CD;
- evaluation of the results.

The inclusion of patients in the dance group was performed as well as their passion for dance and gymnastic exercises, on the basis of the individual therapeutic objectives of rehabilitation, formulated with the evaluation of the results of the administration of the VADO. The dance group is an open group, without a diagnostic screening for mood disorders, while widely available, in addition to psychotic disorders schizophrenia and neurotic disorders. All share a passion for dancing.

The monitoring of the work of the dance group was done through:

- Regular interviews, clinical, psychiatric outpatients, control recorded in the folder and individual psychotherapy for some users;
- Administration of the test VADO at regular intervals (6 months);
- Evaluation of the frequency to the dance group, with record of attendance, compliance with treatment, the level of satisfaction of the user with the same self-assessment;
- Team meetings to monitor the work done.

DANCE GROUP "DANCE THAT YOU GO"

Birth and description of the group

"Dance That You Go" is the dance group that was born in September 2009, for patients suffering from psychotic disorders of affectivity and schizophrenic disorders. The group was created by bringing together the motivations of patients in the DSM demonstrating interest in dance and gymnastic activity and also the use of resources of the operators.

The realization of the Dance Group was made possible thanks to the use of professional skills and dancing competence of the psychologist, supervisor of the study exposure, a worker of cooperative Saint Lucia, an expert in Caribbean dance and host of the dance group, and a nurse from the Center Day, an expert in Latin American dance. The nurse, in addition to cooperating in the conduct of the group and in teaching dance steps she contacts patients, records attendance and monitors the meetings. In the first year, a social animator joined to the project too. Her tasks were: to observe and support the psychologist in the management of group dynamics.

Access and composition of the group

The group consists of 15 patients in the Day Centre, sent by the treating psychiatrist and then chosen by the head of the CD and addressed to the dance group, after

evaluation of the patients's motivations, their strengths and weaknesses on which to act are highlighted with the VADO. The group did not have a choice about the user's pathology so as to create a homogeneous group action. We recruited patients with psychotic disorders and affectivity. Over the years there has been a change in the composition of the group members: some patients completed the rehabilitation programme and they left and others were entered into the dance group.

Operating Modes

- User's Selection: passion for dancing and specific indications of rehabilitation;
- Initial, mid-term (6 months) and final (1 year) evaluation;
- Assessment of the degree of the user's satisfaction and the social recognition achieved by the dance group.

Description of activity

The dance group meets every Tuesday afternoon from 4:00 p. m to 6:00 p.m. The users learn the basic techniques of the dance group (Latin American) and couple dance (Caribbean dance) with the help of the operators. The activity begins with the rehabilitation of athletic training and warm up before the dance and it ends with stretching exercises. After the dance there is a time of group discussion, they express their emotional experiences, linked to the experience which has just ended and the sharing of the same within the group. This moment is very important, because it allows the user to find both solace and support within the group for their experiences, and for the operators, to assess the rehabilitative progress of patients. Particular attention is given to the ability of the users to exit from the relational closure, typical of many mental disorders, especially schizophrenia and a depressive background, overcoming inhibitions to perform in public and to better management of interpersonal relationships.

Therapeutic goals

The Dance Group is an activity aimed at recovering the psychosocial rehabilitation of the psycho-physical capabilities of users by learning the dance group and couple dance. Dancing together, is an engagement which is integrative, playful and it facilitates the improvement of motor and sensory-perceptual skills, it enhances the synchronized motion control and the rhythm of your body in relation to the others. The gymnastic activity and dance in particular, allows the achievement of the following therapeutic goals:

- Having a prompt and effective action to increase psychological well-being with the improvement of mood;
- Increasing their skills and artistic expression;
- Increasing self-esteem;

- Stimulating the care of oneself and one's body;
- Causing the overcoming of inhibitions and social phobias.

By learning the technique of the dance group one will learn how to have a better relationship with your body and with the others and allows the realization of the following general objectives of the project:

- Recovering of psycho-social skills lost and compromised by mental illness;
- The development of Strengths and the Potential of participants;
- The reintegration of users in a social context, with the increase and the improvement in the quality of interpersonal relationships.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

From 2009 to the present and, therefore, in the course of 5 years, the Dance Group has been a great success for the users, who have participated in the activities with constant frequency, dedication and enthusiasm and in addition to learning the basic techniques of couple and group dancing, enjoying nicely, having strengthened relationships with each other. From the interviews made periodically with patients to assess the level of motivation and the degree of enthusiasm to attend the group and from the administration of the VADO, it has been found that the patients, referred to the group demonstrate the achieving of the following objectives:

Improving the capacity of sense-perceptual and motor skills:

- patients after the dance-therapy feel better immediately. They experience mental and physical well-being especially to the legs, often perceived as heavy and painful because of the drugs that they take.

Taking care of themselves and of their own body:

- patients have a greater attention to the care of their body, some have lost weight, others appear to have a more groomed appearance. In particular, some patient reports trying again at home exercises and dance steps learned in the group.

Increasing self-esteem and their ability and artistic expression:

- after an initial phase in which the gymnastic activities and dance were directed exclusively by the operator for reference and the patients were limited to performing the exercises and steps imitating her. In the course of last year, patients have instead learned to become protagonists of the lesson. Each patient, one at a time, takes the place of the dancing teacher and then becoming the group leader, performs a gymnastic exercise or a dance step that he particularly liked. All the other patients must follow him by respecting the role of instructor he plays at that time. This allowed everyone to increase

their self-esteem, feeling, in the role of conductor, not only that they are able to autonomously perform an exercise / dance move but also feeling respected and recognized in the role by the other members of the group. Doing so, patients also showed an increase in their skills and artistic expression, creating new steps, fruit of their imagination.

Increasing and improving interpersonal relationships within the group:

- patients, dancing together, have learned to enter into direct relationship with the other person, starting from a first body contact for reaching out to a deeper emotional and relational one. With the passing of time friendship ties, among some users, have been created within the group, who meet outside the Centre.

Overcoming the stigma and openness to the social context:

In recent years we have prepared some small exhibitions made by patients in the dance group during festivities organized in the Day Centre, in the presence of people outside the group (patients from other groups of rehabilitation, family members, medical professionals and the DSM). Another very significant experience of openness to society, was the participation of the Dance Group in June 2010 at a rally: "Sport and Health", organized by the Municipality of Torre del Greco which was attended by various cultural and sports associations of the town, through presenting performances on the stage mounted in the street, demonstrating their abilities. As a new and unique activities throughout the territory of the city, the mayor has invited the "Group dance" of the day center to take part in the initiative. After some initial hesitation and embarrassment, the experience proved very constructive for the who also experienced having fun in the experience of social integration, which for many of them was totally unknown. The same dance group attended the editions "Pulcinellamente" at the theatre of Sant'Arpino (Caserta), Italy, expressing through dance, the artistic gesture and mime of the body, Neapolitan songs sung by the choir group "Sing that you go", meeting the approval of the public. This performance has been successful because dance e singing were mingled in a pleasant artistic representation.

CONCLUSIONS

The dance group "Dances that you Go" is a tool of rehabilitation of the day centre of UOSM Torre del Greco (NA) DSM ASL NA 3 South. Dance, as well as being a pleasant activity and socializing also has specific actions of psychosocial rehabilitation. Patients, learning to dance, have had positive results on the rehabilitation objectives identified for the recovery of lost skills and enhancing their strengths, as well as

working to overcome the social stigma of the disease. Working together in joy, with the specific and professional skills, has also allowed operators to experience valid psycho-physical benefits.

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Correspondence:

*Dr. Romina Tavormina, Psychologist
viale Leone, 4/F, 80055 Portici (NA), Italy
E-mail: romina.tavormina@libero.it*