



# Clinicians & Art as Therapy



# Executive Summary

From the initial overview, respondents come from various professional backgrounds, including Mental Health Counselors, Nurses, Doctors, and more. For analysis, respondents' primary roles were recoded into broader categories. The survey aimed to capture insights into the current state of art therapy offerings, the reasons for its adoption or absence in certain practice settings, and the professional referral patterns to internal or external art therapy providers.

## Trends and Insights

- **Definition of Art Therapy:** Respondents provided diverse definitions of art therapy, indicating a broad understanding of it as a practice involving creative arts in a therapeutic context. This suggests a general acknowledgment of the potential benefits of art therapy across different areas of health and wellbeing; however, it also suggests a lack of consensus on how it is defined, its usage and application, and its efficacy. Additionally, sentiments about the meaning of art as a therapy tended to lean towards the mental health benefits rather than the wide range of physiological, rehabilitative, or other health benefits of art therapy.
- **Art Therapy Offerings:** The initial data from this study suggests that art therapy is not widely offered across medical practices and places where respondents work. The reasons stated by respondents for not offering art options as a therapy may provide insights into the possible broader, more systemic barriers to integrating art therapy into mainstream healthcare settings.
- **Referrals to Art Therapy:** One in five clinicians indicate they do refer patients to external art therapy providers. However, the majority of clinicians say that they do not know enough about the topic to feel confident in making this recommendation. Many respondents say they may not have the authority to prescribe art therapy or be in the position to do so. The mainstream doctors don't know enough about it, suggesting the lack of available research or education opportunities for them to feel comfortable prescribing it for treatment.

## To focus on the link between health (overall and mental health) and arts, we'll analyze:

- The prevalence and recognition of art therapy in various healthcare settings.
- The reasons provided for the absence of art therapy offerings.
- The frequency and circumstances clinicians refer patients to external art therapy services.

This analysis will help identify overarching trends regarding the perception and utilization of art therapy in enhancing health outcomes, with a particular focus on distinguishing between overall health benefits and those specifically related to mental health.

In the next section, we will summarize the quantitative and categorical data related to these aspects to inform the link between health and arts, starting with overall health and then narrowing down to mental health.

## Overall Generalities on the Link Between Health and Arts

Based on the quantitative and categorical data analyzed from the survey:

- **Availability of Art therapy**
  - A significant majority of respondents (62) indicated that art therapy is not currently offered where they work, compared to a smaller number (11) who stated that it is available.
- **Reasons for the Absence of Art Therapy**
  - Among the reasons provided for the absence of art therapy in their workplaces, common explanations include:
    - Lack of awareness or uncertainty about art therapy offerings.
    - Constraints related to time and the busy nature of healthcare settings.
    - The absence of personnel trained in art therapy specialties.
    - The profound lack of consensus on a definition and application of art as therapy among respondents may be attributable to a wider systemic barrier blocking institutional adoption of art as a therapy, further compounded by the availability of accepted research and education on the topic.
  - This suggests that logistical, educational, and resource-related barriers are key factors limiting the integration of art therapy into healthcare services.
- **Referral Patterns to External Art Therapy Providers**
  - A notable portion of clinicians (12) refer patients to external art therapy providers, recognizing its value. However, the majority (44) do not refer patients to art therapy.



# Executive Summary

## Insights on Health and Arts Link

- **Overall Health:** The data points to a broader recognition of the potential benefits of art therapy in healthcare, albeit challenged by practical implementation issues. The fact that some clinicians refer patients to external providers suggests an understanding of art therapy's positive impact on patient outcomes, even without direct offerings within their practice settings.
- **Mental Health Focus:** There seems to be an underlying belief in the therapeutic benefits of arts, primarily for mental health. This is reflected in the diverse definitions of art therapy given by clinicians and their inclination to refer patients to art therapy in mental health situations. The reasons for not offering art therapy also hint at missed opportunities for enhancing mental health support through arts-based interventions.

## Open-ended Overall Analysis

In analyzing the open-ended responses from a diverse group of healthcare professionals, a compelling narrative emerges regarding the current state of art therapy within the healthcare landscape. Across various roles, there's a common inclination to view art therapy primarily through a mental health lens. This perception underscores the recognized potential of art therapy in addressing mental health issues. Yet, it also highlights a gap in broader healthcare integration, such as physical rehabilitation or neural functioning. Art therapists, as expected, possess a deep understanding of their field's impact, whereas doctors display notable resistance, suggesting a divide in acceptance and implementation across medical disciplines.

A significant finding is the realization of the limited formal education and training for healthcare professionals in the efficacy of arts and health, with only some mention by mental health counselors in one master's level class. The possible omission of any acknowledgment points to a crucial barrier to its adoption and underscores the urgent need for art therapy to be incorporated into healthcare curricula. Such an inclusion could foster a greater understanding and acceptance of art therapy's benefits across the healthcare spectrum.

Responses regarding the awareness of art-based interventions reveal a widespread unfamiliarity and lack of awareness about the practical applications of art therapy within healthcare settings. This knowledge gap extends to the factors considered when recommending art therapy: availability, patient willingness, and logistics concerns like cost or insurance coverage are pivotal yet often restrictive considerations.

Interestingly, the narrative changes when discussing the observed impacts of art therapy. While overall observations of change or improvement are limited due to scarce application in practice, art therapists provide insightful reflections on positive outcomes, particularly in enhancing social skills and promoting calmness among patients. This discrepancy in observation and articulation between art therapists and healthcare professionals underscores the need for more widespread and integrated use of art therapy, allowing for a richer understanding of its efficacy across various conditions.

Moreover, the responses suggest a general challenge in articulating the role of the creative process and self-expression in art therapy's effectiveness, hinting at a broader uncertainty or lack of understanding about art therapy's foundational principles.

The overarching themes from the survey responses call for a concerted effort to demystify art therapy, integrate it into healthcare education, and address the practical hurdles of knowledge, staffing, and program availability. As healthcare professionals from varied backgrounds—predominantly within public and community health settings—highlight these challenges, it becomes clear that, for art therapy to reach its full potential, a systemic shift in perception, education, and practice is essential for art therapy to reach its full potential.

The following pages in the report provide the methodology and further analysis that will delve deeper into these aspects, especially examining the data across primary roles for more nuanced insights.



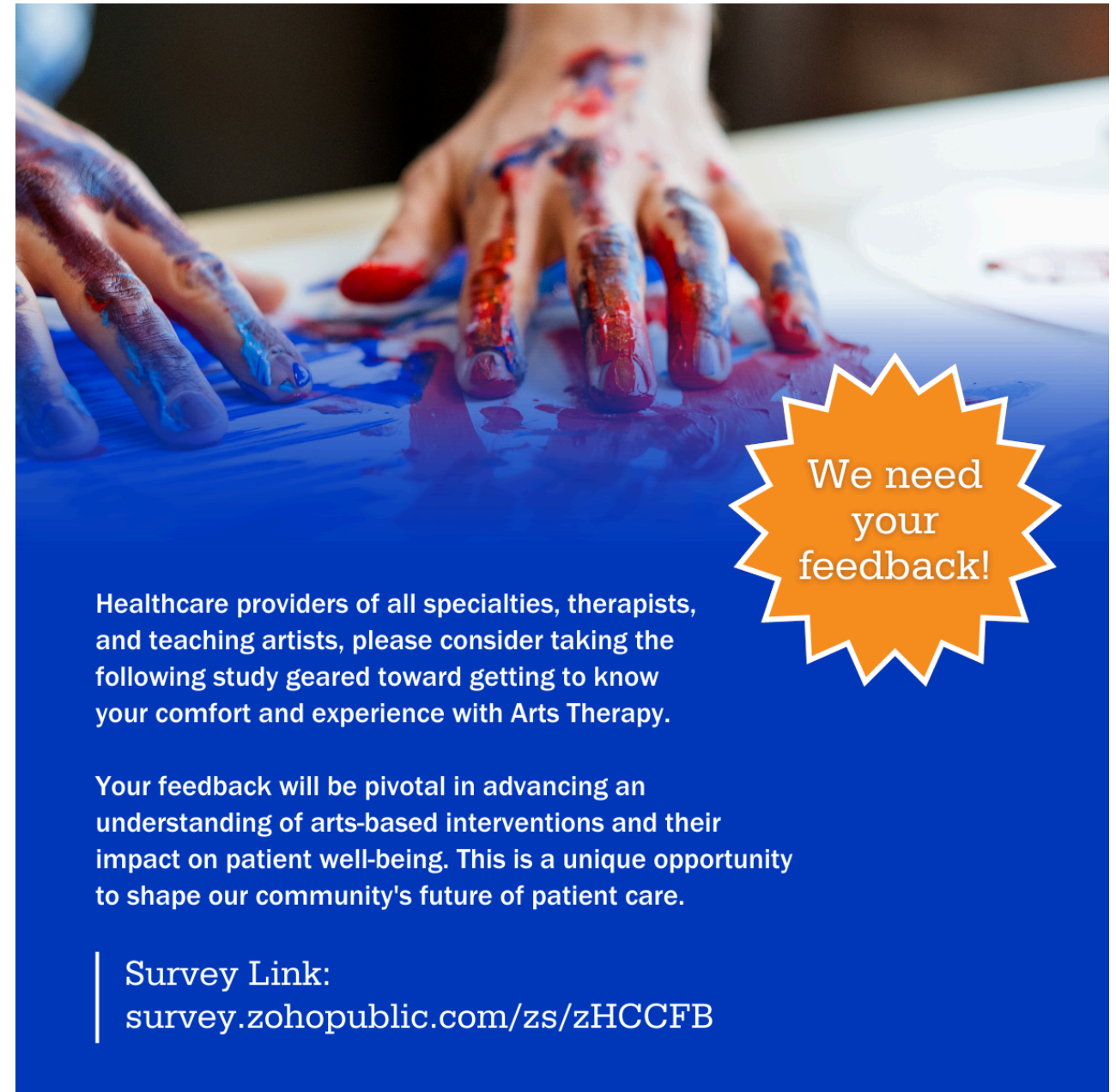
# Methodology

The study, commissioned by the Winter Park Health Foundation, was conducted to investigate healthcare clinicians', technicians', and teaching artists' attitudes and acceptance towards the adoption of arts as therapy. This project was initiated by designing a survey based on insights provided by UF Center for Arts & Medicine and supplemented with additional secondary research. A paper based on this secondary research ([click here to view](#)) was distributed to stakeholders of the project and provided to clinicians involved with True Health and the Primary Care Access Network. The initial concept questions for the survey were reviewed and refined by a triad of doctors affiliated with True Health to ensure relevancy, pertinence, and applicability.

The revised survey was then evaluated by a committee of doctors and nurses affiliated with True Health, who critically reviewed each question during a two-hour session. This process involved taking the survey sans skip-logic, which lasted approximately 25 minutes, to ensure thorough understanding and relevance. Post-review, the survey was further edited to align with the study's objectives.

The distribution of the anonymous survey link was conducted among various medical and arts teams (i.e., True Health, Grace Medical Home, Central Florida Vocal Arts, Orlando Museum of Art), encompassing a wide range of healthcare professionals, including nurses, technicians, administrators, as well as teaching and clinical artists. To enhance response rates amid initial challenges, the survey was also disseminated through social media channels (see LinkedIn post on the right). In total, 77 individuals participated, providing a diverse set of responses for analysis.

Given the modest sample size, the roles identified by participants were collapsed into five distinct groups. The approach to analysis was two-pronged: quantitative data was compiled and placed into the Appendix of this report for reference (provided separately), while qualitative responses were examined in depth to identify overarching themes and sentiments. This dual analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive narrative of the current understanding and implementation of therapeutic arts within the healthcare sector.



We need your feedback!

Healthcare providers of all specialties, therapists, and teaching artists, please consider taking the following study geared toward getting to know your comfort and experience with Arts Therapy.

Your feedback will be pivotal in advancing an understanding of arts-based interventions and their impact on patient well-being. This is a unique opportunity to shape our community's future of patient care.

Survey Link:  
[survey.zohopublic.com/zs/zHCCFB](https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/zHCCFB)



# Analysis By Role: Mental Health Counselors

## Overall Trends and Insights

Among Mental Health Counselors, the survey data reveals a nearly even split in the availability of art therapy within their workplaces, with 3 indicating it's not offered and 2 stating it is. This may suggest a division in accessibility to art therapy in mental health settings, reflecting both opportunities and challenges in its implementation.

## Link Between Art and Health

The reasons provided for the absence of art therapy highlight critical barriers to its broader adoption. One respondent mentioned that art therapy is a new concept at their center, suggesting a potential openness to its future integration with proper training. Another pointed out the lack of trained specialists in art therapy, indicating a significant hurdle in offering such services.

## Insights on Art and Health Link

Referral patterns to external art therapy services further elucidate the stance of Mental Health Counselors on the value of arts in therapeutic practices. While four out of five do not refer their patients to external art therapy providers, one does, hinting at recognition of its benefits despite the internal unavailability. This suggests an acknowledgment of art therapy's potential in enhancing mental health outcomes, albeit constrained by practical limitations such as training and resource allocation.

## Open-ended Question Analysis

For Mental Health Counselors, their perspectives on art therapy provide a nuanced view that both aligns with and diverges from the overarching themes identified across all healthcare professionals. Notably, their definition of art therapy as a method of expression emphasizes the therapeutic potential of art in communicating thoughts and feelings that are otherwise hard to articulate.



# Analysis By Role: Mental Health Counselors

This perspective resonates with the general consensus, underlining art therapy's role in mental health through expressive means.

Their views on the role of art in healthcare as a coping skill and a means to express emotions highlight a deep understanding of art therapy's benefits in mental health care. This is particularly evident in the quote, "It is providing patients with more ways of expressing their issues and needs," which succinctly captures the essence of art therapy's value.

However, when it comes to education on prescribing or referring art therapy, Mental Health Counselors point to a gap, with only a couple mentioning it as part of their Master's course. This suggests a need for more comprehensive educational integration, echoing the broader call for formal education or training in art therapy.

Their responses diverge from the overall theme regarding awareness of specific art-based interventions, with either no answers or acknowledgment of unawareness. This indicates a potential area for development in their professional training and resources.

Interestingly, despite the overall theme of art therapy not being widely used in practice, one Mental Health Counselor shared a positive experience, offering a glimmer of how impactful art therapy can be when applied. Yet, the scarcity of such responses underscores the underutilization of art therapy in their settings.

Factors considered when recommending art therapy, such as patient willingness and potential benefits, reflect a thoughtful approach to its application, while observed changes in clients—increased verbalization, more joy, and less depression—demonstrate tangible benefits of engaging in art therapy.

The essential role of the creative process and self-expression in the effectiveness of art therapy was unanimously recognized, highlighting Mental Health Counselors' appreciation for the transformative power of art.

The challenges of implementing art therapy, attributed to a lack of staff and recognition of art therapy as a new concept, alongside a lack of knowledge of programs, mirror broader systemic issues. Operating primarily in community health and outpatient settings, Mental Health Counselors' insights reveal both the potential and the hurdles of integrating art therapy into mental health care, emphasizing the need for increased awareness, training, and structural support to harness art therapy's full potential.

## Conclusions

The insights from Mental Health Counselors underline a cautious yet optimistic perspective towards integrating art therapy into mental health care. The primary challenges identified include the novelty of art therapy within certain practices and a lack of trained professionals to deliver these services. Despite these barriers, there is an acknowledgment of art therapy's potential, as evidenced by referrals to external providers, showcasing a path forward through increased training and awareness.

"It is providing patients with more ways of expressing their issues and needs"



# Analysis By Role: Doctors, Dentists, Optometrists

## Overall Trends and Insights

In the category encompassing Doctors and other types of medical professionals (such as Dentists and Optometrists), a vast majority (25) reported that art therapy is not available in their practice settings, with only one affirming its presence. This reflects a significant gap in the availability of art therapy across diverse medical disciplines, highlighting systemic or institutional barriers to its integration.

## Link Between Art and Health

The reasons for the absence of art therapy in these settings underscore several key challenges:

- **Lack of Trained Providers:** Responses indicate a clear lack of professionals trained in art therapy, as seen in comments like "We do not have any providers trained in art therapy" and "We don't have an Art therapist on staff."
- **Awareness and Funding Issues:** Some responses hint at emerging awareness and potential interest ("it is coming. funding was limited"), yet reveal that financial constraints and limited awareness hinder the adoption of art therapy.
- **Uncertainty About Availability:** Multiple responses of "not sure" suggest a lack of clear information or understanding about art therapy and its potential benefits within these professional groups.

## Insights on Art and Health Link

Referral patterns to external art therapy services among this group show a mix of engagement, with six doctors referring patients to such services. This indicates a recognition of the therapeutic benefits of art therapy among a segment of the medical community, despite the internal unavailability of these services. The existence of non-responses (3) may also point to varying levels of familiarity or interest in art therapy across the medical profession.



# Analysis By Role: Doctors, Dentists, Optometrists

Doctors' responses to questions about art therapy reveal a nuanced understanding that aligns with the broader perception of art therapy as primarily a mental health intervention. However, their insights also highlight significant gaps in education, awareness, and integration of art therapy within their practice, diverging in specific areas from the overall themes identified across other healthcare roles.

## Open-ended Question Analysis

### Divergences and Insights

- **Definition and Role in Healthcare:** Doctors overwhelmingly view art therapy through a psychotherapeutic lens, emphasizing its role in expressing emotions and relieving stress. This aligns with the overall theme, but the emphasis on mental health and psychotherapy, with only a few recognizing its potential in healing physical symptoms, underscores a need to broaden the understanding of art therapy's applications beyond mental health.
- **Education and Awareness:** The lack of education regarding prescribing or referring art therapy is evident among doctors, with the overwhelming majority having received none. This gap significantly influences their engagement with and perceptions of art therapy, underscoring an urgent need for integrating art therapy education into medical training.
- **Perception and Utilization:** Responses indicate a perception of art therapy as adjunctive or complementary to traditional psychiatric or mental health treatments, with one doctor expressing skepticism about patient interest. This suggests a limited view of art therapy's potential and a general hesitancy to embrace it fully within healthcare settings.
- **Experiences and Efficacy:** While most doctors did not share specific experiences with art therapy, the few positive examples, especially concerning children with autism, highlight art therapy's potential impact. The lack of detailed responses on its efficacy and applicable conditions reveals a need for more exposure and experience with art therapy among doctors to appreciate its versatility and effectiveness.

## Quotable Comments and Theme Analysis

A doctor's comment, "doing art to help people with mental illness express their feelings," captures the prevailing view of art therapy as a tool for emotional expression. Yet, the noted plans for future implementation and the acknowledgment of art therapy's calming effects and focus enhancement in some patients suggest an emerging recognition of its value.

The challenges of staffing, budget constraints, and a perceived focus on mental health, as evidenced by the comment, "we are not a psychiatric facility," highlight systemic barriers to art therapy's broader acceptance and integration within medical practice.

## Conclusions

Doctors' perspectives on art therapy, characterized by a blend of acknowledgment and skepticism, reflect broader trends of mental health-centric views and significant educational and systemic barriers. To bridge these gaps, targeted efforts to educate medical professionals about art therapy's comprehensive benefits, coupled with initiatives to integrate it into healthcare systems more effectively, are crucial. Enhancing awareness, developing referral systems, and ensuring insurance coverage can further facilitate art therapy's incorporation into holistic patient care, moving beyond its current perception and utilization.

The findings from this group suggest a notable interest in and potential for the integration of art therapy into broader medical practice, currently hindered by practical barriers such as lack of trained professionals, funding, and awareness. Enhancing training opportunities, increasing awareness about the efficacy of art therapy, and addressing funding issues could facilitate greater inclusion of art therapy in patient care across various medical disciplines, offering holistic and innovative approaches to health and well-being.

“doing art to help people with mental illness express their feelings”





# Analysis By Role: Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians Assistants, PT Therapists

## Overall Trends and Insights

For the group combining Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians Assistants, and PT Therapists, a significant majority (24) reported that art therapy is not currently offered in their workplaces, with only two affirming its availability. This indicates a notable gap in the provision of art therapy within these healthcare settings, potentially reflecting broader sectoral or organizational challenges.

## Link Between Art and Health

The reasons cited for the absence of art therapy in these settings highlight several obstacles:

- **Operational Constraints:** Responses such as "Too busy with patients" and "not enough staffing" point towards operational constraints as major barriers.
- **Organizational Size and Readiness:** Comments like "Not a big enough organization" and "It is in the works," suggest that organizational size and readiness play roles in the adoption of art therapy services.
- **Provider Availability:** The mention of "little availability in providers" underscores a critical shortage of qualified art therapy providers as a limitation to offering such services.

## Insights on Art and Health Link

The referral patterns to external art therapy services reveal a cautious engagement with art therapy among these professionals, with a small number (2) indicating they refer patients to external providers. This, coupled with the number of non-responses (6), may indicate a range of awareness and valuation of art therapy's benefits among these roles.

## Open-ended Question Analysis

Nurses, Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Physician Assistants (PAs), and Physical Therapists (PTs) offer a distinct perspective on art therapy, largely aligning with the overarching theme that recognizes art therapy as a means for mental health support, emphasizing self-expression, psychotherapy, and stress relief. However, their insights reveal specific nuances regarding the application, education, and perception of art therapy within their professional practices.



# Analysis By Role: Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians Assistants, PT Therapists

## Key Themes and Divergences

- **Definition and Role in Healthcare:** This group uniformly views art therapy as a valuable tool for psychotherapy and stress relief, with a few acknowledging its role in healing and overall care plans. The trend of opinions is that art therapy as a medium for addressing emotional or physical issues, not merely as a diagnostic tool but as a therapeutic aid, aligning with the broader mental health-centric view but also hinting at a recognition of its broader therapeutic potential.
- **Education and Awareness:** The lack of education regarding prescribing or referring art therapy stands out, with the overwhelming response being none. This gap indicates a critical need for integrating art therapy education within nursing and allied health professional training programs to enhance understanding and application in clinical practice.
- **Perception and Utilization:** Responses on art therapy's role in healthcare suggest it is seen as an adjunct to mental health therapy, valued for its stress-relieving and emotional expressive benefits. The comment that art therapy "may relieve patients' stress and depression better than taking medications" underscores a belief in its efficacy as complementary to traditional treatments, yet the lack of widespread implementation points to underutilization and a need for broader advocacy within healthcare settings.
- **Experiences with Art Therapy:** While many respondents have not used or observed art therapy directly, those who have, particularly in music therapy and with children with autism, acknowledge its beneficial effects. This indicates a recognition of art therapy's value in specific patient populations but also reflects a broader trend of limited direct experience among these healthcare professionals.
- **Barriers and Recommendations:** The challenges of no time, no staff, and a lack of knowledge about art therapy's availability within healthcare settings echo systemic barriers to its integration. The perception of art therapy not being a high priority, coupled with a lack of awareness about programs, suggests that structural and educational interventions are necessary to elevate art therapy's role in patient care.

## Conclusions

The perspectives of Nurses, NPs, PAs, and PTs on art therapy highlight a consensus on its value for mental health and stress relief, yet reveal significant gaps in education, awareness, and systemic support for its broader application. Addressing these gaps requires targeted efforts to educate healthcare professionals about art therapy's benefits, integrate art therapy services into more healthcare settings, and advocate for its inclusion in patient care plans. Enhancing knowledge about and access to art therapy can potentially enrich the therapeutic options available to patients, fostering a more holistic approach to healthcare that incorporates the healing powers of art.

This analysis uncovers a substantial recognition of the potential value of art therapy, albeit hindered by practical and logistical challenges. The healthcare professionals in this group face operational and organizational barriers that limit the integration of art therapy into patient care. Despite these challenges, there exists a nascent acknowledgment of its benefits, as indicated by referrals to external services. Addressing staffing, awareness, and organizational readiness could facilitate greater incorporation of art therapy into these healthcare settings, potentially enriching patient care and outcomes.

"may relieve patients' stress and depression better than taking medications"



# Analysis By Role: Art Therapists, Teaching Artists, Producer in the Arts

## Overall Trends and Insights

Within the category of Art Therapists, Teaching Artists, and Producers in the Arts, the responses indicate a balanced distribution regarding the availability of art therapy at their workplaces, with five reporting it is not offered and four stating it is. This division reflects the niche position of art therapy within the broader arts community, highlighting both the presence and absence of formalized art therapy programs.

## Link Between Art and Health

The reasons cited for the absence of art therapy reveal insightful challenges:

- **Perception and Acceptance:** One response indicates that art therapy is "Not generally accepted as a therapy," pointing to broader issues of perception and acceptance within the healthcare and arts communities.
- **Certification and Value:** Other comments touch upon the "Certification process" and the lack of perceived value, suggesting that professional and institutional recognition are significant hurdles. Additionally, the mention that "It is not valued as a credible investment" yet incorporating art therapy techniques into sessions reflects a complex relationship between formal recognition and practical application.
- **Necessity Questioned:** A response stating "Not necessary" hints at differing views on the essential nature of art therapy within certain arts settings.

## Insights on Art and Health Link

The data shows a lack of responses regarding referrals to external art therapy providers, which could suggest that art therapists and related professionals may primarily provide such services themselves, or there might be a lack of structured referral systems within this community.

## Open-ended Question Analysis

Art Therapists and Teachers bring a distinctive perspective to the discourse on art therapy, emphasizing its utility in processing emotions and complementing traditional medicine. Their insights largely influence the overarching theme that views art therapy through a mental health lens, reinforcing its perceived value in emotional and mental well-being.

**However, their responses also reveal nuances that diverge from the general consensus, offering a deeper exploration of art therapy's role in healthcare.**



# Analysis By Role: Art Therapists, Teaching Artists, Producer in the Arts

## Insights and Quotable Comments

- **Art Therapy Definition and Role in Healthcare:** Art Therapists and Teachers understand art therapy as a means to process and express emotions and cope with trauma, aligning with the overall perception of art therapy as mental health-centric. A notable comment, "Use of the arts to aid people in processing and expressing emotions and cope with emotional, mental or physical trauma," captures this sentiment, emphasizing art therapy's therapeutic potential beyond mere expression to encompass healing and better health. Their view that art therapy complements and enhances traditional medicine, offering "a holistic health approach," suggests a broader vision for art therapy's integration into healthcare.
- **Education and Awareness:** The lack of responses regarding education received for prescribing/referring art therapy, despite some being certified, points to a paradox in art therapy education. This gap underscores the need for formal education and training in art therapy within healthcare curricula, echoing broader calls for its inclusion.
- **Art-Based Interventions and Experiences:** Despite many respondents not offering specific art-based interventions, one mention of meditation as an art-based technique indicates an openness to integrating diverse therapeutic practices. The overwhelmingly positive experiences shared, with one therapist emphasizing the mistake of limiting or stopping therapy prematurely, highlight art therapy's transformative potential. This perspective is critical, suggesting that perseverance in art therapy can yield unexpected and rewarding outcomes.
- **Efficacy and Factors for Recommendation:** Responses on the efficacy of art therapy and factors considered when recommending it underscore the importance of patient receptiveness and the diverse benefits observed in patients, including improvements in social skills, calmness, and confidence. These insights reveal a deep understanding of art therapy's impact, with therapists able to articulate specific changes in their clients, highlighting the personal and programmatic goals of art therapy.
- **Creative Process and Barriers:** Art Therapists/Teachers underscore the invaluable role of creative process and self-expression in art therapy's effectiveness, with one noting the controlled confrontation with problems and emotions it allows patients. However, barriers such as lack of public and institutional understanding and funding challenges reflect significant hurdles to art therapy's broader acceptance and implementation.

## Conclusions

Art Therapists/Teachers' responses illuminate the complex landscape of art therapy within healthcare, marked by recognition of its profound mental and emotional benefits, yet challenged by educational, operational, and societal barriers. Their unique position as practitioners and advocates highlights the need for increased awareness, comprehensive training, and systemic support to elevate art therapy as a crucial component of holistic healthcare. Their insights not only reinforce the mental health-centric view of art therapy but also advocate for its broader application and integration into traditional healthcare practices, envisioning a future where art therapy is widely recognized and utilized as a vital tool for healing and well-being.

This analysis underscores the unique position of art therapists and arts professionals in advocating for and implementing art therapy. While facing challenges related to acceptance, certification, and perceived value, there's a clear indication of art therapy being practiced and valued within certain segments of this community. The split in availability suggests a field at a crossroads, with potential for growth and broader acceptance through increased awareness, formal recognition, and demonstration of efficacy. Addressing these challenges could enhance the integration of art therapy into healthcare and arts sectors, emphasizing its role in promoting health and well-being.

“Use of the arts to aid people in processing and expressing emotions and cope with emotional, mental or physical trauma”



# Analysis By Role: Administrators, Clinical Managers

## Overall Trends and Insights

For Administrators and Clinical Managers, the quantitative data reveals that a majority (5 out of 7 responses) reported that art therapy is not currently offered at their workplaces, with only two affirming its presence. This distribution underscores the challenges and limitations within healthcare settings regarding the integration of art therapy, echoing the broader narrative of its underutilization in healthcare services.

## Link Between Art and Health

The single reason provided for the absence of art therapy—"maybe due to space, location or specialist"—highlights practical and logistical barriers to its implementation. This insight is critical, as it points to the operational challenges faced by administrators and clinical managers in accommodating art therapy within their practice settings, suggesting that concerns over space and the availability of specialists are significant hurdles.

## Insights on Art and Health Link

The referral patterns to external art therapy providers are evenly split, with three administrators referring patients to external providers and three not doing so (and 1 response missing). This balance indicates a recognition of the value of art therapy among some administrators, despite its unavailability within their own institutions, and suggests an openness to leveraging external resources to provide patients with access to art therapy.

The data regarding the type of practice settings administrators work in was not provided (all responses are marked as NaN - tech speak for "Not A Number," meaning no response was entered), resulting in a gap in understanding the specific healthcare environments from which these insights are drawn. This absence of data limits the ability to contextualize their perspectives within specific healthcare settings, such as hospitals, clinics, or community health centers.



# Analysis By Role: Administrators, Clinical Managers

## Open-ended Question Analysis

Administrators' perspectives on art therapy provide a unique lens through which the administrative challenges and perceptions of art therapy within healthcare settings can be understood. Their responses align with the overall theme that views art therapy predominantly as a mental health intervention, with a focus on painting or expressing emotions. However, only a couple of administrators recognize it as a therapeutic practice aimed at improving mental or physical well-being, encapsulating the broader healthcare community's varied understanding of art therapy's scope.

The quotable comment, "Therapists use art therapy to help patients express and understand their emotions and thoughts," reflects a recognition of art therapy's value in emotional and cognitive processing, albeit through a somewhat limited scope of activities like painting. This recognition aligns with the general consensus of art therapy's role in healthcare as an expressive tool for improving mental health.

A notable gap in education about prescribing or referring art therapy among administrators underscores the broader need for art therapy's inclusion in healthcare education, highlighting an area for potential growth and development.

Administrators' acknowledgment of resistance to using art as therapy, albeit generalized, hints at underlying challenges in patient and practitioner acceptance, mirroring a singular but significant concern within the broader healthcare context.

The absence of responses to questions about specific art-based interventions, observed changes or improvements from art therapy, and inspiring cases of healing arts reflect a broader trend of underutilization and lack of direct experience with art therapy in practice settings. This underlines the need for increased awareness and integration of art therapy within healthcare services, beyond the realm of mental health counselors and art therapists.

Administrators point to practical issues like space and location as barriers to offering art therapy, highlighting logistical challenges that go beyond the clinical efficacy and educational gaps, suggesting that even with recognition of art therapy's potential benefits, operational constraints can significantly hinder its implementation.

Working predominantly in arts administration and clinics, administrators occupy a critical role in the decision-making processes that could facilitate or impede the adoption of art therapy in healthcare settings. Their insights into the efficacy of art therapy—highlighted by the importance of patient receptiveness—underscore the conditional nature of art therapy's success and emphasize the need for a supportive environment to maximize its benefits.

In summary, administrators' perspectives reveal a complex interplay of recognition, operational challenges, and educational gaps in the integration of art therapy into healthcare. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, logistical planning, and fostering a broader acceptance of art therapy's role in promoting health and well-being.

## Conclusions

The quantitative analysis for Administrators and Clinical Managers highlights a landscape where operational, spatial, and specialist-related challenges hinder the broader adoption and implementation of art therapy in healthcare settings. While there is an evident recognition of its benefits, as demonstrated by the willingness to refer patients to external providers, overcoming these hurdles requires strategic planning and resource allocation. Addressing space constraints and ensuring the availability of qualified art therapy specialists are pivotal steps towards integrating art therapy more fully into healthcare practices, ultimately enhancing patient care through holistic and creative therapeutic approaches.

**“Therapists use art therapy to help patients express and understand their emotions and thoughts”**



# Key Takeaways & What's Next?

- 1. Lack of Understanding and Research:** There exists a significant gap in understanding what constitutes therapeutic arts, extending beyond mental health applications. This ambiguity, coupled with a dearth of research on practical applications, creates barriers to the adoption of arts as therapy by medical professionals.
- 2. Cultural and Institutional Barriers:** Cultural norms and institutional practices within healthcare settings further hinder the acceptance and integration of art therapy into patient care regimens.
- 3. Need for Advocacy and Education:** To overcome these barriers, there is a crucial need for champions and advocates, such as the Winter Park Health Foundation, to promote awareness and understanding of the benefits of art therapy. This includes sponsoring continuing medical education (CME) for healthcare professionals and supporting research to demonstrate art therapy's efficacy.
- 4. Community Engagement and Feedback:** Engaging with the arts community through initiatives like the Arts for Community Health Mastermind, commissioned by Winter Park Health Foundation, can provide valuable insights into the public's perception and experiences with art therapy. Collecting and analyzing data from arts program participants can offer evidence needed to persuade the medical community of the therapeutic value of the arts.
- 5. Scalability and Funding:** Identifying scalable models, such as True Health's Social Pharmacy, and seeking additional healthcare organizations to adopt similar practices can extend the reach and impact of art therapy programs. Furthermore, securing funding for data collection and research is essential to building a compelling case for art therapy's inclusion in healthcare services.
- 6. Insurance and Coverage:** Encouraging dialogue with insurance providers and making a business case for art therapy could lead to broader coverage and acceptance, presenting it as a viable alternative to more traditional interventions.
- 7. Training and Protocols for Teaching Artists:** Developing training programs and certification for teaching artists to engage effectively with patients is vital. This ensures that artists are equipped to contribute positively to patients' health outcomes while adhering to medical protocols and ethical standards.

Through these key findings and recommendations, the study underscores the need for a concerted effort to integrate art therapy more deeply into healthcare practices, advocating for a holistic approach to patient care that recognizes the therapeutic potential of the arts.

