

## **Art-therapy: stimulation of residual capacities in patients with dementia.**

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**Introduction:** Patients with dementia (Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia) sometimes attend group sessions of art-therapy. Beyond obvious pleasure, could art-therapy be capable of connecting the person in all its human vitality and enabling stimulation of certain residual capacities in patients with dementia?

**Method:** An exploratory study carried out by an art-therapist/cellist working weekly for 4 years with patients resident in a long-stay hospital unit. The study concerns 70 sessions; 42 residents, average age 88 years; 86% dementia, 5% bedridden, 15% aphasic, 25% wandering, 15% psychotic. Concerts were conceived combining the cello, percussion, bells, poetry and dance, aimed at generating psycho-emotional states (listening to lively music from a targeted repertoire), stimulating memory capacities (songs and words, tallied grid of reassimilated words), restoring confidence and self-esteem (musical and poetry improvisation, grid of individual involvement) enlivening motor capacities (playing instruments, choreography, grid of movements developed), expressive capacities (recital, bodily expression, collection of works created) and relational capacities (group dynamics, grid of relational capacities). An observation form was used to assess the patients, featuring items targeting the therapeutic strategy adapted to each patient.

**Results:** The impact of music is clearly evident revealing the possibility of stimulating residual capacities whether they be cognitive, motor or relational, improvements in self-esteem and sociability, minimising behavioural or thymic disorders, relief of pain and anxiety as well as regaining a taste for living.

**Conclusion:** This experience has produced encouraging results nonetheless limited by the length of sessions. The study shows the extent to which the calming, energising and unifying properties of art can contribute to stimulating residual capacities in patients with dementia participating in an activity in a group dynamic.