



Finding Ithaca in the Fading Mind: A Case Study on Enhancing Psycho-emotional Well-Being through Positive Art Therapy in Dementia

Itakės paieškos blėstančioje sąmonėje: sergančiųjų demencijos sindromu psichoemocinės būklės gerinimas taikant pozityviają dailės terapiją – atvejo analizė (LT)

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Due to global demographic changes, population aging is accelerating, resulting in a growing prevalence of health conditions typical of older adults. Among these, cognitive decline and dementia are particularly significant. In 2021, 57 million people worldwide were living with dementia, with nearly 10 million new cases each year (WHO, 2025).

Comprehensive dementia care requires an integrated approach combining pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions. Pharmacological treatment remains limited: no highly effective medications exist for Alzheimer's disease (current drugs have only pathogenetic or symptomatic effects of limited duration), while other types of dementia lack disease-specific treatments. Long-term pharmacological management of behavioral symptoms often causes adverse effects, and overuse of neuroleptics is regarded by the OECD as an indicator of poor-quality care (Bienassis et al., 2020; Van der Steen, 2017). Even when medications are prescribed, non-pharmacological approaches should be used alongside them (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

Psychological interventions are recommended for addressing psycho-emotional difficulties in dementia (Deshmukh et al., 2018). International guidelines highlight the value of creative and artistic activities adapted to individual preferences, skills, and capacities (NICE, 2006). Art therapy is one of the most widely recognized approaches in this context (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

Research on art therapy in dementia has mainly focused on cognitive functioning, quality of life, behavioral symptoms, and psychological well-being (Deshmukh et al., 2018; Emblad &



Mukaetova-Ladinska, 2021). However, fewer studies have addressed its role in enhancing psycho-emotional well-being.

This doctoral research investigates the impact of art therapy sessions designed to evoke positive emotions, provide enjoyment and relaxation, and foster social connection, thereby reducing isolation. The intervention emphasizes pleasant experiences, positive life memories, and the discovery of current strengths and abilities. The conference presentation will share the latest findings from this ongoing study, contributing new insights into the psycho-emotional benefits of art therapy for individuals living with dementia.

References

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Biography

Aušra Sebeikaitė - Art therapist, PhD by Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, lecturer, committee member of the joint Master's degree programme Art Therapy run by Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and Vilnius Academy of Arts, Kaunas Faculty, Head of Art Therapy Society TerapiArta. Currently, she teaches at the university and works as an art therapist at one of Lithuania's Mental Health Day Centers. Aušra has over 20 years of professional experience in psychiatry. She regularly participates in conferences, updates and improves her knowledge in seminars, and publishes articles on art therapy. Research Interests: Dementia, Suicide, Mental Health, Art Therapy.

Recent Publications

Sebeikaitė, A., Mostauskis, S., Rapolienė, J. (2023). **Effect of Art Therapy on Changes in Psycho-Emotional State for Women Who Have Attempted Suicide.** *Reabilitacijos mokslai: slauga, kineziterapija, ergoterapija* 1.28 (2023): 35-48.

<https://doi.org/10.33607/rmske.v1i28.1358>

Sebeikaitė, A. (In production). **Changes in the Formal and Iconographic Elements of the Visual Expressions of Women Who Have Attempted Suicide.** *International Handbook of Art Therapy Practice* edited by Margaret Hills de Zárata, Diane Waller, and Claire Louise Vaculik.

Sebeikaitė, A. **Socio-cultural considerations for the treatment of Trauma in Lithuania.** *International Panel: Art therapy across the globe: Socio-cultural considerations for the treatment of Trauma.* The George Washington University Columbian College of Arts & Sciences.