Dementia and Painting: How Art Helps Caregiving Dyads

Mariya Kovaleva, RN, BSN, PhD Candidate,1 Whitney Wharton, PhD,2 Fayron Epps, RN, PhD,3 Lindsey Bridwell, MPH, CHES,4 Rachanice Candy Tate, DAH,5 Cornelya Dorbin, MPA,6 Kenneth Hepburn, PhD1,6,7

1 Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 2 Department of Neurology, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA 3 Byrdine F. Lewis School of Nursing and Health Professions, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 4 Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 5 Arts at Emory, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 6 Emory University Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center, Atlanta, GA 7 Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA

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Background & Purpose

• Population of persons living with Alzheimer’s disease:
  5.5 million (2017) → 13.8 million (2050)

• Over 15 million Americans – unpaid caregivers for persons living with dementia

• Art therapy – a novel intervention for dyads
  - Decreased caregiver burden
  - Socialization, improved morale & self-confidence
  - Reduce dementia symptoms
  - Creative non-verbal expression

Describe participants’ experience in a pilot painting program for five caregiving dyads
Methods & Intervention

- Observations of painting sessions
- Semi-structured interviews with five caregivers
- Qualitative description

- Four sessions:
  - Museum Tour
  - Painting
Results

• Overall positive experience

• Care recipient’s surprising (to the caregiver) ability to focus on painting

• Socialization & camaraderie

• The need to tailor activities to the person’s dementia stage
Discussion & Conclusion

• Art therapy

Left brain:
logic, reasoning, language

Right brain:
creative expression

• Verbal expression lost; basic motor & visual skills may be retained

• Appropriate for persons living with dementia & their caregivers

• For some persons, more structure and less distraction – no museum tour