



# The Effectiveness of a Dance and Movement Group as an Occupation for Older Adults Living in a Residential Living Facility

Laura-Lin Clark, OTS; Dr. Gavin Jenkins, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Department of Occupational Therapy | University of Alabama at Birmingham

Melissa Turnage, Artis in Residence | UAB Arts in Medicine: Episcopal Place of Birmingham

## Introduction

- UAB Arts in Medicine and Birmingham's Episcopal Place pair together for a professionally led dance and movement group for the residents of Episcopal Place. These residents are older adults typically 65 years and older. The current group and facility directors have no information regarding the effectiveness of the current dance and movement group.
- The purpose of the current evaluation of the group is to determine if the dance and movements provided weekly is effectively increasing the happiness, reducing anxiety, and maintaining participant satisfaction through six weeks.
- Desired occupations for older adults are critical for impacting perceived quality of life and increasing happiness. In a study conducted by Melhuish et. al., in 2017 it was concluded that 'Residents demonstrated often unexpected ability and motivation to engage and express themselves in many ways, allowing staff to gain new knowledge about residents' feelings and previous and existing skills and abilities. Many residents who had previously appeared withdrawn, unmotivated, or unsettled, were seen to participate fully in the sessions and enjoy themselves' [p. 288].
- Dance is a specific type of occupation used to link a person's body, mind, and social components to incorporate the ability to reminisce through music (Vankova et al., 2014).
- When used as an intervention, dance can increase physical and cognitive functions in older adults by involving multisensory stimulation, social interaction, and sequence learning to promote participation (Predovan et. al., 2019). Dance is adaptable for all ages with and without physical limitations.
- Consistently, older adults reported being particularly attracted to dancing because a playful and spontaneous atmosphere enabled them to remember and 're-live' happy experiences from their youth (Brustio et. al., 2018).

## Methods

UAB AIM and EP staff have requested the capstone student to determine the effectiveness of the current dance and movement group on the residents' happiness, and if the group is an appropriate way to continue to provide occupational opportunity for the residents of EP.

Using the:

- Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)
- State Trait Anxiety Inventory - state short form (STAI-s)
- Participant Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ)

The surveys were administered at the beginning of 6 weeks, and the end of the 6-week process. Survey information was collected without PHI, and anonymously placed into covered folders.

Thirteen (n=13) participants of the current dance and movement group chose to participate in the pre-test surveys.

Twelve (n=12) participants of the current dance and movement group chose to participate in the post-test surveys

The capstone student also provided a brief educational session regarding the nature of the program evaluation and its' importance to occupational therapy literature.

## Results



## Discussion

- Participants expressed 100% satisfaction in pre and post 6-week surveys. Questions included:
  - Do you like this group?
  - Does this group make you happy?
  - Would you recommend this group to others?
- Participants ranked their subjective happiness and anxiety levels before and after 6 weeks
  - 85% of participants stated they were a very happy person at the beginning of 6 weeks, and 58% ranked themselves as a very happy person at the end of 6 weeks.
  - Majority of participants (92%) at the beginning of 6 weeks stated they were not at all frightened or upset. After 6 weeks of dance, 75% of participants stated they were not at all upset or frightened.

## Discussion continued

Survey Responses:

- Participants agreed this group is fun, it makes them happy, and the changes in their anxiety levels were of reason.
- Participants at the end of the 6-week period performed a recital for members of the community, which was a result of increased nervousness and anxiety.
- Some participants wrote down one to two words describing how the group makes them feel. Words that changed over time include:
  - Connected
  - Welcoming
  - inclusive

Limitations:

- Specific to UAB AIM and residents of Episcopal Place
- Short time (6-week) measurement of feelings regarding program
- Requests of use of UAB AIM in similar facilities can only be made around Birmingham

## Conclusion

The current dance and movement group at EP facilitated by UAB AIM is effective in maintaining participant satisfaction, increasing subjective happiness, and maintaining anxiety levels in weekly participating older adults.

As occupational therapists examine and seek effective groups for older adults to choose as recreational opportunities, increasing the use of dance and movement groups should be considered.

## References

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Contact: Laura-Lin Clark [chaffinl@uab.edu](mailto:chaffinl@uab.edu)