



Dance Therapy

Ms. Devika Mehta

Dance therapy, or dance movement therapy (DMT) is the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance for emotional, cognitive, social, behavioral and physical conditions.

As a form of expressive therapy, DMT is founded on the basis that movement and emotion are directly related. The PDMDS

conducted a dance and movement therapy program with members of 3 support groups. Thirty members enrolled for the program. The program consisted of 16 sessions, twice a week for 2 months. Each session was for the duration of an hour. To objectively evaluate the benefits of the program participants were administered a

Quality of life scale/questionnaire (PDQ 39) prior to and post the program. Results indicated a significant improvement in the following domains as measured by the PDQ 39 : Activities of daily living, emotional well being, stigma and cognition.

While conducting the program I

observed that repeating the steps to the music helped in reducing start hesitation and freezing. The practice and repetition, brought an automaticity to a lot of different movements making it easier for the patients to perform those movements and transfer it to routine activities like turning and maintaining a steady pace on a crowded street or even climbing stairs. This could be due to the fact that DMT provides a model for movement, making the patient think about how to move before they actually do so and hence helps with motor symptoms like gait problems, freezing and bradykinesia.

Dancing also helped in increasing body awareness and body control, thereby considerably reducing jerky and abrupt movements in some patients. In addition, portions of the warm-up routines were designed to help improve the posture and chairs were used while dancing in order to help maintain posture as well as balance initially. Once into the program it was observed that movement became enjoyable again and the

participants not only enjoyed the steps they had mastered but ventured further to dance freely without the boundaries of the steps. They gained self confidence and applauded each other when difficult movements were achieved with practice and determination.

Overall dancing addresses 3 main components – Firstly it is performed to music and hence



provides external cues, secondly it involves teaching of specific movement strategies and lastly it incorporates balance exercises. Additionally, it makes movement enjoyable and helps in increasing self confidence.

Members of the support groups were initially hesitant to attend these dance therapy sessions as some had never danced before. But

according to Mr. Gurukrishnan and Mr. Achwa, once they started enjoying themselves, even the rains did not deter them from missing a single session. Most of them reported that their self confidence had increased in daily activities, such as, Mr. Narkar found it easier to turn as well as balance in the narrow places of his house. These improvements in mood and balance were reported not only by them but also noticed by their caregivers.

The caregivers like Mr. Ruparel also reported that his wife was much more enthusiastic to exercise at home and her mood in terms of depressive feelings had also improved tremendously. Most of them reported that being in

a group gave them support and made them happy due to the togetherness they felt and also that they were there to encourage each other to get the difficult movements. Even though the therapy was in a group setting, most of them also reported that they were satisfied since they also received individual attention.