

pARTicipate: Art as Self-Expression for Persons with Aphasia



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What do you get when you combine: 4 artists, 1 woodshop, 9 weeks, and a dash of salt?

Purpose:

- pARTicipate was a student-initiated, student-led art group.
- The aim was to explore art as self-expression in an aphasia-friendly setting.

Background:

- Many people living with chronic aphasia (PWA) face barriers in accessing community-based leisure programs.
- Art groups using various media have been used as an intervention for acute stroke survivors¹ and PWA^{2,3}.
- pARTicipate was the first art group offered specifically to PWA at the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured.

Projects:



Methods:

Participants:

- 4 PWA in an outpatient program.
- Participants were required to commit to attending all nine sessions.

Sessions:

- Nine weekly sessions, 1.5 hours each session.
- Sessions 1-8: PWA completed 6 art projects.
- Session 9: *Share Day*.
- Participants completed a satisfaction survey after session 9.



Share Day:

- Family, friends, and ARBI staff members were invited to *Share Day*.
- Participants showcased their projects and taught their skills to family and community members.



Participant Feedback:

- Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered from satisfaction surveys.
- All participants indicated that they:
 - Enjoyed sharing their art with the community during *Share Day*.
 - Would join the group again if it was offered.
 - Are now comfortable, or very comfortable with art.
- Two participants continued to make art independently.

"[He] looked forward to going each week. He returned to his care facility very happy."
–Participant's wife

Conclusions:

- It is expected that skills learned may increase PWA confidence about participating in community-based art classes and foster a sense of belonging to the artistic community.
- Having learned to incorporate personal symbols, PWA can be deliberate in their use of art for self-expression in the future.

Share Day:

- PWA were empowered to assume a leadership role
- Teaching newly acquired artistic skills to family and community members, promoted positive feelings about the self, and revealed their competencies.

Limitations:

- Surveys could be more comprehensive in order to gain more information about participant experience.

Future Directions:

- Three of four participants are in long term care, therefore the pARTicipate curriculum could be shared with the staff at nursing homes.
- Participants were given the opportunity to practice teaching art in their regular aphasia conversation group in preparation for *Share Day*. Future art groups should incorporate a practice session.
- Evaluate the barriers in place for PWA to do art at home.



Final group project: *Our Passions*

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