MEASURING THE CREATIVE EXPRESSIVE ABILITIES OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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In the industrialized world, the aging of the population is expected to peak between 2025 and 2045, raising enormously the number of people with dementia who require care. Emerging research is showing that programs for people with dementia which engage them in some form of creative activity (such as painting, making music, singing or cooking) can be surprisingly effective in enhancing their psychological health and well-being and thus their quality of life. In order to document the benefits of such programs and thus increase their broader acceptance by the medical professions as well as by care facility administrators and staff, we have created a new assessment instrument for collecting comprehensive quantitative evidence concerning the numerous and diverse positive effects that occur when people with dementia are given the opportunity to participate in creative activities. Our instrument, called the Creative Expression Activity Assessment instrument, has 25 core items that cover seven different domains: memory, attention, language, psychological skills, reasoning, emotionality and culture. The instrument, which is easy to use, is intended primarily for activity facilitators who may wish to assess the expressive abilities of individual clients in order to place them in the most suitable activity programs, for tracking clients’ progress, or for comparing the beneficial effects of participation in different types of activities. In our presentation, we will report on the development of the instrument, especially on the steps we took to increase its reliable use. We will also discuss possible uses of the instrument in research and practice settings.