

# Merina Healing Arts Foundation

## FACT SHEET FOR ARTS + HEALTH MONTH

November is **Arts + Health Month**, which was created by the Society for the Arts in Healthcare—a non-profit 501c3 international organization founded in 1991 and based in Washington, DC—whose mission is to advance the arts as integral to healthcare.

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**ARTS+HEALTH**  
MONTH

*Around the world, the arts are emerging as an integral component of healthcare. Today, healthcare initiatives that involve partnerships between arts and health professionals are demonstrating real benefits—improving patient outcomes, helping people make connections, and engendering a sense of community.*

### What is Arts in Healthcare?

Arts in healthcare is a diverse, multidisciplinary field dedicated to transforming the healthcare experience by connecting people with the power of the arts at key moments of their lives. This rapidly growing field integrates the arts—including literary, performing, and visual arts and design—into a wide variety of healthcare and community settings for therapeutic, education, and expressive purposes.

### Benefits of the Arts in Healthcare

- ❖ Documented benefits of participating in **visual arts and art therapy activities** include
  - improved depression and lower fatigue levels in cancer patients on chemotherapy (Bar-Sela, Atid, Danos, Gabay, and Epelbaum, 2007);
  - reduced acute stress symptoms in pediatric trauma patients (Chapman, Morabito, Ladakakos, Schreier, and Knudson, 2001);
  - improved care for veterans returning from Iraq with symptoms of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Collie, Backos, Malchiodi, and Spiegel, 2006).
  
- ❖ Positive outcomes achieved through **music therapy and music interventions** include
  - improved executive function and emotional adjustment with Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) in Traumatic Brain Injury rehabilitation (Thaut et al., 2009);
  
  - increased capacity for flexibility and tolerance of change in children diagnosed with autism (Gold and Wigram, 2006);

- decreased use of sedatives during medical procedures (Loewy, Hallan, Friedman, and Martinez, 2005; Walworth, 2005).
- ❖ Outcome research regarding the benefits of **dance and dance/movement therapy** includes
    - improved mobility in individuals with fibromyalgia (Bojner-Horwitz, Theorell, & Anderberg, 2003) and adherence in adults with cystic fibrosis (Goodill, 2005);
    - enhanced physical, psychosocial, and cognitive functioning of older adults with neurotrauma (Berrol, Ooi, and Katz, 1997);
    - increased self-esteem and reductions in stress (Ho, 2005);
    - increased self-awareness and appreciation of one's body, for cancer patients (Dibbell-Hope, 2000).
  - ❖ Demonstrated benefits of interventions involving **dramatic arts, drama therapy, and psychodrama** include
    - greater understanding and relief from isolation for breast cancer patients (Sinding, Gray, Grassau, Damianakis, and Hampson, 2006);
    - increased understanding of medical students, residents, and staff concerning the humanistic elements of end-of-life care (Steckart and Rosenfeld, 2004);
    - enhanced ability to address cognitive functioning and quality-of-life issues important for older adults to live independently (Noice and Noice, 2004).
  - ❖ Studies using **creative writing and poetry therapy** as an intervention report
    - improved lung function in students and adults with asthma after written emotional expression (Bray, Theodore, Patwa, Margiano, Alric, and Peck, 2003);
    - fewer visits to physicians and reduced symptom complaints (Pennebaker, 1997, 2004).
  - ❖ Research has also focused on **architecture and design** issues, which include
    - designing to incorporate views of nature to reduce stress and enhance a sense of control—a key aspect of wellness—as indicated by several laboratory and clinical studies (Capozza, 2009);
    - reducing patients' length of stay in hospitals and costs by decreasing risk associated with healthcare-related infections (Zhan & Miller, 2003; Pittet, Tarara, and Wenzel, 1994)—research shows that healthcare-related infection rates are lowered substantially when room design is effective, incorporating considerations such as proper ventilation and single occupancy (The Center for Health Design, 2003).

