



**Karolinska
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Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society

Division of Occupational Therapy and Division of Physiotherapy

Participation in Dance, Rhythm and Music Activities

Experiences of healthy elderly and persons with stroke

som för avläggande av medicine licentiatexamen vid
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av

Kerstin Thornberg

Leg. sjukgymnast. MSc

Huvudhandledare:

Professor Staffan Josephsson
Karolinska Institutet
Institutionen för Neurobiologi, Vårdvetenskap
och Samhälle

Bihandledare:

Med.dr. Ingrid Lindquist
Karolinska Institutet
Institutionen för Neurobiologi, Vårdvetenskap
och Samhälle

Betygsnämnd:

Professor Anita Björklund
Stiftelsen Högskolan i Jönköping
Avd. för rehabilitering

Docent Kerstin Frändin
Karolinska Institutet
Institutionen för Neurobiologi, Vårdvetenskap
och Samhälle

Docent Cathrin Martin
Uppsala Universitet
Institutionen för neurovetenskap

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Abstract

Participation in meaningful creative activities such as dance and rhythm/music has been found beneficial for older adults and for persons with stroke, as it might increase awareness, improve emotional and physical status, and thus be salutogenic.

The aim of this study was to explore and understand participation in dance, rhythm and music activities for healthy elderly persons and for persons who have had a stroke.

The specific aim of Study 1 was to develop knowledge of elderly persons' experiences of participating in an improvisational dance workshop. Data was collected by interviewing 13 persons. To capture participants' experiences, open-ended questions were used to make it possible for participants to bring up issues of relevance for themselves. A narrative method was used to analyze data. Findings show that participation led to "a surprising awareness about the connection between body and mind" and that "participation led to personal growth".

Further results showed how participation in a physical activity such as creative improvisational dance opened possibilities to interpret the lives the informants had lived, which in turn made it possible for them to come to terms with the past, leading to increased perceived quality of life.

The aim of Study 2 was to investigate how stroke patients understand participation in Ronnie Gardiner Rhythm and Music (RGRM) therapy. Data was collected by interviewing 18 persons with stroke. The analytic procedure was carried out with a phenomenographic approach. Results showed that body awareness was experienced as increased due the training. Furthermore a feeling of change in competence occurred when participants were able to carry out tasks simultaneously, which had previously not been possible for them to do. The findings of this paper suggest that participation in an activity that is challenging and demanding was valued.

Findings suggest that participation in movement activities such as improvisational dance and rhythm/music therapy seems to have promoted health in the group of healthy elderly and facilitated a return to a meaningful life in the group of persons with stroke. Offering participation in dance, rhythm and music can add to the tools used by physiotherapists.

Key words: body awareness, dance, elderly, learning, narrative, phenomenography, rhythm/music, stroke