ART THERAPY MAY BE BENEFICIAL FOR REDUCING STRESS-RELATED BEHAVIOURS IN PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA - Case report

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SUMMARY
Communication with person with dementia (PWD) is becoming worse and worse during the course of illness, and at the end may be totally lost. Non-pharmacological interventions may be beneficial in increasing the behavioural disturbances which appears frequently during the progression of dementia, and combination of non-pharmacological techniques and drugs is usually more efficacy than psychopharmacs alone. Mr. Zvonko, the PWD diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease of moderate stage, is presented in this case report. Although Mr. Zvonko was treated with antidementia drugs, the behavioural disturbances were present. The introduction of low doses of conventional antipsychotic was accompanied with extrapyramidal side-effects, and atypical antipsychotics were not used due to the FDA warning and non-willingness of caregiver and family to take that risk. After his individual and family status was evaluated, he was advised to attend the daily care centre and to start with art therapy. Despite he was never drawing pictures before developing AD, everybody, including his wife who is also a caregiver, was surprised with his talent and creativity. While drawing the pictures he was calm and satisfied and his behaviour in the daily care centre, but also at home, became much more adequate. There was no need to add psychopharmacs for behavioural disturbances. In this case the art therapy was shown to be an excellent add-on non-pharmacological intervention, beneficial for reducing stress-related behaviours in PWD taking antidementia drugs.

Key words: Alzheimer’s disease - antidementia drugs - art therapy - communication - dementia

INTRODUCTION
There is a lot of evidence that non-pharmacological interventions can improve quality of life in person with dementia (PWD) (Ayalon et al. 2006, Cohen-Mansfield et al. 2007, Kong et al. 2009). There is also some evidence that art therapy can be beneficial for PWD (Basting & Killlick 2003, Bell & Troxel 2006, Bell et al. 2007, Cayton et al. 2008, Midorikawa et al. 2008, Lee 2009). Some data show that participation in art therapy groups effects significant positive changes in mood and cognition both immediately within sessions and later outside the sessions having impact on behaviour in the day care/residential care setting (Rusted 2006, Bonner 2006). Using nonpharmacological interventions as an add-on therapy we can possible avoid some side-effects of antidementia drugs (Mimica & Preščki 2009, Mimica & Preščki 2010a, Mimica & Preščki 2010b).

CASE REPORT
Mr. Zvonko, a person with Alzheimer's disease (AD) who was involved in art therapy while attending the daily care centre for PWD.
Alzheimer Disease Societies Croatia (ADSC) which is located in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, is running the Counseling centre from its foundation since 1999 (Mimica et al. 2006a, Mimica et al. 2006b). We have monthly meetings for families of PWD and all other interested (www.alzheimer.hr). The caregiver (wife) and Mr. Zvonko, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia of moderate stage, came one day to Counselling centre (Mimica 2007). He was already on standard pharmacological treatment with antidementia drugs but behavioural disturbances were present (Folnegović-Šmalc et al. 2006, Vuksan-Cuša et al. 2007, Mimica 2009). The introduction of low doses of conventional antipsychotic was accompanied with extra-pyramidal side-effects, and atypical antipsychotics were not used due to the FDA warning and non-willingness of caregiver and family to take that risk. After his individual and family status were evaluated, he was advised to attend the daily care centre in Nursing home for older and incapable people "Medveščak", in Zagreb. This daily care centre, which has longest experience with rehabilitation of PWD in Croatia, is located in the centre of the town, and the transportation for PWD is provided (Mimica et al. 2006c, Mimica et al. 2009). They are equipped with occupational therapists that are providing a person-centred rehabilitation. So, they have agreed that for Mr. Zvonko, who was technician - art therapy may be appropriate (Mimica et al. 2010). Although he was never drawing pictures before developing AD, everybody, including his wife, was surprised with his talent and creativity (Figures 1-12). While drawing the pictures he was calm and satisfied and his behaviour in the daily care centre, but also at home, became much more adequate, and complete communication was improved (Mimica 2011).
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CONCLUSIONS

Art therapy, as an add-on non-pharmacological intervention, can improve the quality of life of PWD and their caregivers, but also be beneficial for communication and reducing stress-related behaviours e. g. behavioural disturbances in PWD taking anti-dementia drugs.

REFERENCES

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Disclosure of interest
The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.