

Art Therapy Meets Neuroscience

Brain Activity May Be Useful in Measuring Benefits of Painting and Drawing

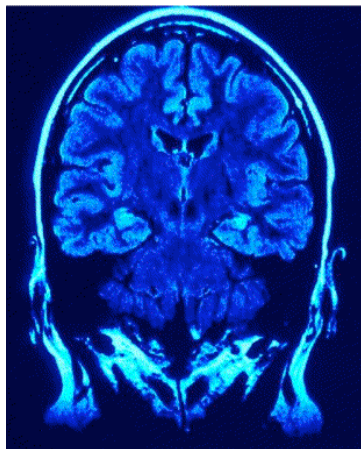
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Alexandria, VA--- Brain imaging technology is not only useful to diagnose illness, but also may provide ways to understand aspects of human behavior such as artistic creativity including painting and drawing. Human interactions, learning, emotions, and performance of various activities can all alter brain activity. Those changes can be recorded with the help of devices such as electroencephalographs (EEG) that image the flow of electrical activity in the human brain.

Art therapist Christopher Belkofer, MAAT, LPC, set out to explore patterns of brain activity following an hour of painting and drawing. The results of this single subject design appear in "Conducting Art Therapy Research Using Quantitative EEG Measures," in the most recent issue of *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 25(2). While larger studies are needed, the results of this study indicated that brain activity after painting and drawing was statistically different than activity measured at a resting state. The study was conducted at the biological psychiatry lab at Hines Veterans Hospital in IL.

Belkopher, art therapist at Lutherbrook Children's Center and instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and co-investigator, Lukasz Konopka, PhD, Professor, Chicago School of Professional Psychology, report that this study suggests that an EEG is "a useful and innovative tool for conducting art therapy research" and that additional research in this area is warranted. In the future, art therapy could be prescribed based not only on a person's history, but also baseline EEG patterns. Therapy could then be tailored to normalize brain activity and lead to improvement of certain medical or mental health conditions.



For information about art therapy, please visit the AATA website at www.arttherapy.org or *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* at www.arttherapyjournal.org. The American Art Therapy Association, Inc., was founded in 1969 and develops and promotes educational, professional, and ethical standards for the practice of art therapy. The AATA provides information to its members and the public regarding the field of art therapy through publications, a scholarly journal, and an annual conference.

Please join us for the 39th Annual Conference of the American Art Therapy Association, "Art Therapy on the Cutting Edge: Invention and Innovation," from November 19-23, 2008, Cleveland, OH. Go to www.aataconference.org for more information!

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