Alzheimer’s disease and art mediation therapeutic workshops
Review

- For the past 30 years France Alzheimer has defended and supported non medicinal therapies which are crucial for the quality of life of the patients.

- France Alzheimer namely organizes workshops in various regions of France which use art mediation: theatre, painting, music...
Art mediation workshops are particularly adapted because:

- they do not solicit cognitive skills such as reasoning, logic, language…

- art mediations rather solicit the ability to feel, perceive, express emotions, and to create

- they positively affect self-confidence and self-esteem of the patients
Projects in 2013

In 2013, France Alzheimer oversaw a number of projects:

- an assessment of the art mediation workshops developed in the regional associations in order to identify the settings of the workshop, the benefits, the quality of the artistic contributor etc.

- a collective publication with the collaboration of artists using art mediation.

This publication will be composed of text, photography, testimonies and interviews of experts. It will attempt to promote the art mediation workshops for patients, starting at the early stages of the disease.
The assessment of 29 art mediation workshops setup by 26 France Alzheimer associations has shown:

- The more the public concerned is vulnerable, the more it is necessary to ensure the quality of the settings and of the artistic contributors,
- Most of the time, the workshops are offered to patients in the early and intermediary stages of the disease,
- Half of the workshops are weekly, and the other half take place twice a month.
- The most used art forms are music and painting (and then theatre).
- Half of the workshops are intended for the patient only, and the other half for both the patient and caregiver.
Assessment art therapy workshops

Artistic contributors’ background:
- they must perfectly master the art they offer
- it is strongly suggested they follow additional art therapy training
- it is advisable they be familiar with the symptoms of dementia

The settings and objectives:
- the objectives must be realistic, quantifiable, and most of all determined in collaboration with each patient
- the objective is by no means to interpret the outcome, nor to have the patient develop artistic know-how.
- the art medium acts as the mediator for the relation of the patient with herself, with others, and enables a facilitated expression of self.
Assessment art therapy workshops

Instructions:

- the artistic activities can be offered to all patients even if they have never yet done that particular artistic activity,

- the patient must understand and adhere to the proposition being made to her, and make sense of it,
“I discovered painting after my diagnosis. Art enables me to express what I am incapable of saying. At the time of the diagnosis I felt like my back was up against the wall. The patient is in an unspeakable situation. She must bear the label of the mentally-ill. When I return from a trip, painting enables me to express what I feel and to keep a record of what I have seen. Pictures on the other hand are not always helpful. Expression through painting enables to establish a link, a memorable vision. It is a means of expressing the inexpressible.” Fabienne
“When I am on stage I am not a sick person anymore… I am a person. I give everything I have in me for the public. Being sick is not shameful! Since I have been participating in activities, I have opened up. Even if I am not feeling well, when the artistic contributor arrives it’s a breath of fresh air. To me, the show we put on is a gift. I give everything I have thus public sees the disease differently […], they do not only see the negative aspect of the disease, they can see the disease can also be joyful and beautiful.” Lysiane
The book to be published in 2014 has several objectives:

- To raise awareness and give value to non medicinal care through art mediation workshops,
- To inform on the setup modalities of these workshops to ensure an adapted care for the patients,
- To reflect on pursued objectives and observed benefits,
- To inform the families regarding these concrete therapeutic solutions
Publication of the book

The structure of the book is the following:

A text section: corresponding to the 6 chosen mediation art forms (music, photography, painting, clown, theatre and dance) composed of two experience restitutions by artists or art therapists and completed by an interview of an expert on the subject.

A picture section: composed of 6 photography reports done in 6 art mediation workshops in medico social institutions.
Each mediation has its particularities: certain mediations such as theatre and dance enable group work and solicit the body unlike painting, music and photography which are more individual. Clown comedy has a very interesting impact on the institution.

**Theatre:** Theatre is all about the group, the fellow actors, the public. It is a group effort which conveys a peculiar excitement, which transmits thousands of emotions, which promotes mutual exchange and support between people.

**Painting:** the objective is for the person to express deep feelings through the practice of a mediation art form. This approach enhances self value all while enabling expression. The idea is to dig for the light within the patient, through his vision, his listening, and his involvement.
Book contend
**Music:** Music is a means of communication which is deeper than verbal communication. It relaxes, appeases, lets one evacuate negative tension, and consoles. It gives back a joy of living and a certain confidence in their ability. With music, they dig out emotions deeply rooted in their identity, and which date back to the early stages of their life.

**Dancing:** It solicits the body, but also appeals to the emotional side. In dance therapy we help patients rediscover the pleasure of moving their body and create a relation with another person. The group aspect is very important in dance therapy.
Book contend
Clown: The prerequisite is to establish contact, to create an exchange, not necessarily with words, because finding the appropriate contact sometimes requires more than words. This can be music, or singing. We bring to the patients special care. We bring them benevolence and love of life. It is very important for the patients to understand that they are still able to laugh. This gives them confidence.

Photography: with photography, it is the language of images, and the body is practically not involved. It is a language which whets curiosity, increases perceptive skills, lets each person develop his imaginary world and show creative skills.
Book contend

23st Alzheimer Europe
Conférence
Malta october 2013
Book contend
Art has the ability to convey what daily life cannot. It enables the formalization of emotions which have no other “receivable” means of expression by our social environment. Art is not only the desire to create or a skill. It is also a means of transcribing what we have within us and which cannot be expressed in any other way. These objectives are particularly adapted to Alzheimer patients, because they are even more in need of developing their artistic expression abilities since speech is no longer an option.