

"Body & Soul" by the Numbers

By Valerie Carruthers



For quite some time it's been known that when the performing arts and the visual arts are brought into nursing homes, hospitals or hospices, the impact on residents has been highly positive in terms of their psychological state and overall well-being. That's the warm, fuzzy side of things, as observed in numerous qualitative studies done in the United States and abroad.

Yet whether the arts are truly beneficial to the elderly and physically challenged in several critical areas was never demonstrated quantitatively. Cold, clinical, quantitative analysis is needed to prove the effect of an arts program in a nursing home, hospital or other medically oriented setting—only it has long been missing from the equation. Until now.

A recent 16-week study examining Body & Soul: the Art of Healing, the award-winning program at St. Catherine Labouré Manor (see *Arbus*, Nov. 2002), has demonstrated that the arts do achieve positive changes that can be determined quantitatively. It looked at depression, mood/behavior patterns and pain control in St. Catherine's residents vs. a control group



at the River Garden facility.

Conducted using scientific means by Germina "Gemma" Rio, a nurse-practitioner at St. Catherine's, it is "one of the first that combines music and art in the medical community," says Mark Marble, the facility's activities director.

Body & Soul was founded by James Jenkins, principal tubist of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, to link the arts with Jacksonville's healthcare community.

Supported by institutions such as St. Vincent's Foundation, which funded the pilot program, as well as private sources, Body & Soul brings musicians from the JSO and other performing arts groups to St. Catherine's at regular intervals every month.

The program partners with the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens to bring ongoing hands-on art projects and related art talks to the residents. On a recent afternoon, the tables in the activities room were covered with their creations: brightly colored collages inspired by a reproduction of Matisse's 1958 *Le Getes de la Mer*. Vocalist Michelle Payne sang standards and played guitar as residents, sitting at tables or in wheel-



chairs, snipped, designed and pasted away under the guidance of educators from the Cummer. Payne, who has been involved with the program about a year, says that her experience with St. Catherine's has "sparked an interest" in performing at other assisted living facilities.

All of which makes St. Catherine's seem an unlikely setting for a scientific experiment. How to measure what appears immeasurable? Rio found a way.

As Rio told the *Financial News & Daily Record* in September, "Scholars want proof that you are using a sensitive tool," one that has been used many times with a given population. "In the study, we used valuable and reliable measures."

Her study incorporated the Geriatric Depression Scale-Short Form, the Minimum Data Set-Section E, and other standard testing tools, to obtain quantitative data. (MDS is a federally mandated tool by which Medicare grades nursing homes, according to Rio.)

It followed sixty, randomly selected, male and female nursing home residents who had consented to participate for 16 weeks. Half the residents were assigned to the treatment group at St. Catherine's and half to a control group at River Garden, which has no arts program.

Both SCLM and River Garden are faith-based, not for profit local nursing home facilities in Jacksonville.

Testing was administered in a five-to-seven minute, yes-no format. Under standard research guidelines, Rio's criteria for residents' participation included alertness and hearing ability.

The study tracked two 15-minute a month each, one-on-one "Room Service" (JSO) music visits and one-on-one visual arts (Cummer) visits for each resident in the target list, plus a twice monthly, 30 minute "Helping Hands" group activity where a solo artist plays music to the treatment group while each resident paints.

Rio's findings showed the Body & Soul program provided a statistically significant improvement in depression scores as measured by the GDS-SF among nursing home residents. The program also provided a statistically significant improvement in mood and behavior patterns based on MDS-Section E scores among nursing home residents.

However, Body & Soul did not provide clinically significant pain relief among nursing home residents in this sample. This was because St. Catherine's and River Garden both employ gerontological nurse practitioners who have developed an active pain management program, utilizing medication, in the facility, according to the study.

Last June, Rio presented the results of her study at the Cummer and says that it may be undergoing replication in Tallahassee. She plans to publish it in a medical journal. In the future, more studies using larger groups of residents over a longer treatment period are needed, Rio has said. She hopes to re-survey the participants after one and two years to evaluate the long-term effects.

Meanwhile, the vibrations of Body & Soul continue to ripple out, at St. Catherine's and elsewhere. On a tour of the facility, Marble shows off a wall of cheerily patterned tiles painted by the residents' family members. The Alzheimer's unit is being redesigned to appear less clinical, with doorways being painted by a local artist to resemble those of Avondale. Landscape views will adorn the hallways and nursing station.

Marble considers the program "a stimulus to beautify the facility. Body & Soul taught us to think outside the box." Performing arts being brought to St. Catherine's are burgeoning beyond the JSO. Those have ranged from gospel, children's and handbell choirs to steel drum players, jazz ensembles and the noted Don Thompson chorale.

"We pool the resources of the entire arts community," states Jenkins, who received an award from the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville in 2002.

Other beneficiaries of Body & Soul

now include Ronald McDonald House, Mayo Clinic and St. Vincent's Hospital. The types of offerings and levels of exposure are tailored to meet the institutions' varying needs. Those may range from specific events at Mayo to as much as three to four times a week at St. Catherine's, explains Jenkins.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Jenkins has launched a new initiative: giving high school and college students involved with the performing and visual arts a chance to work off required community service hours through Body & Soul. This will bring them into St. Catherine's and other facilities. And yet another study may be implemented, in collaboration with Baptist Cancer Institute.

As Jenkins comments, "It's working out the way we envisioned."

The St. Catherine's Study: How Body & Soul Scored

• Concept:

The study sought to determine the effect of the Body and Soul program on depression, pain control and mood/behavior patterns among sixty residents, thirty at St. Catherine's Labouré Manor versus a control group of thirty at River Garden.

• Means:

The Geriatric Depression Scale-Short Form focused on psychological distress, such as sadness, pessimism, hopelessness and loss of interest or pleasure in most activities (Miller, 1990). The Treatment Group measured 44 percent pre-test which plummeted to 11 percent post-test, a "statistically significant improvement in depression scores."

The Minimum Data Set-Section E included verbal expressions of distress, sleep cycle issues, sad/apathetic/anxious appearance, loss of interest, mood changes and disruptive behavior. The Treatment Group scored 44 percent mean pre-test, cutting it in half to 22 percent post-test, a "statistically significant improvement in mood and behavior patterns."

In the Paired Samples Test, GDSPre-GDSPost scored .046. The figure is significant when it falls below .05, according to Rio.

• Conclusion:

The study demonstrated that the Body & Soul program is a non-pharmacologic intervention that is effective in allaying depression and anxiety, and in promoting satisfaction among nursing home residents.

Source: The Effect of Body and Soul Program on Depression, Pain Control, and Mood/Behavior Patterns among Nursing Home Residents. By Germina Emily R. Rio, MN, CPH, ARNP, CS.

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