ARTmail for Alzheimer’s:
A Partnership Project Between

Supported by the National Endowment for the Arts Research: Art Works Grant
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Research Evaluation: ARTmail for Alzheimer’s Community based participatory research

1. CAN-NC designs and delivers ARTmail

2. Seniors participate in ARTmail

3. UNCG evaluates impact of ARTmail on seniors
What is ARTmail?

- A participatory, creative, visual arts program for seniors of diverse abilities (including memory symptoms and dementia)
- Based on abstract expressionism (no drawing ability needed), focus is on colors, shapes, textures, etc.
- Takes place in senior care communities (residential or day)
- 8 weekly sessions, 1 to 1.5 hours each
- Run by trained artists and volunteers
- Involves students as interns, research assistants, volunteers, etc.
Seniors live and have art sessions in different sites. Each is paired with another senior at a partner site to exchange their creations.
The inside surface of a cardboard box is used as a canvas. Choice in tools and colors is encouraged.
The box ‘work in progress’ is mailed to the partner artist at the partner site, who opens it, adds to the art, and mails it back. The first artist then makes further additions to the piece. A ‘box story’ gives more opportunity for communication between the artists. The boxes make everyone happy!
Collective Public Exhibition

At the end of 8 weeks, there is a public exhibition of the works for friends, family, community.
ARTmail Research: 2016-2017 Study

- Large scale study (N=200) in Guilford Co. January 2016 – mid 2017
  - Do participants with memory symptoms or dementia improve in neuropsychiatric symptoms (apathy, agitation, mood) compared to control group persons who engage in their usual activities for the study period?
  - How to improve program design and delivery?
Recruitment Logistics

- Announcements through associations, newspaper, personal calls/emails
- Adult day care, residential care: serving seniors with memory diagnoses
- Face-to-face with staff to provide explanation & package of materials
- 1 ARTmail group & 1 control group (10 participants in each) at each site
- ARTmail group participates in art, control group does their usual activities
- Research ethics: gaining informed consent: four complex steps

1. LAR gives consent for senior
2. LAR signs HIPAA consent
3. Senior gives assent
4. Professional caregiver gives consent to be interviewed
Student experiential learning and training are key

- Undergraduate and graduate students are closely involved in all stages.
- Gain vital hands-on learning not possible in a conventional classroom in a large University
- Support from UNCG: HHS, URSCO, ORED, OLSL, etc.
Study Design: Mixed Methods

• **Quantitative methods: survey based:**
  • pre- and post- interviews with professional caregivers of seniors
  • Comparison from baseline to endline, and with a control group of seniors who engage in usual activities

• **Qualitative methods: conversational interview based:**
  • In-depth interviews with selected participants: staff, seniors, family
  • Field observations of art sessions
  • Photographs
Expected findings...

Increase in:
Physical Health, Enjoyment of the Process: “Art High”

Decrease in:
Depressive Symptoms, Apathy, Agitation
Our goal:
A well-designed, evidence-based participatory arts program that improves quality of life of seniors with memory symptoms or dementia.
For more information

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