

Table 2 Summary of findings from the studies by qualitative methodology

Study first author and methodology	Description of study	Mixed method (M), Single study (S) or no method given (NM)	Methodology	Primary data collection tool I (interview) F (focus group) OB (observation) O (Other) N (no detail given)	Brief findings	Sample size (where available)	Client group
Grounded theory	Grounded theory (GT) has the goal of developing a theory which explains and provides insights into the phenomenon and the study. GT means progressive focusing on particular concepts and ideas important for the emerging theory. Grounded theory is ... a creative process that is appropriate to use (where there is) a lack of knowledge of the theory of the topic (or) when the existing theory offers no solution to problems (or) when modifying existing theory (Holloway 2005). Examines the relationship between participation in a community based expressive art programme for individuals with disabilities						
Torkelson [1]		M	GT	I	Benefits of arts included improved self esteem, opportunities and social interactions Some evidence that art making supported women to improve self esteem and identity. Less clear link between this and reduction of violence.	44	Adults with disabilities
Lazzari [2]	Art programme for incarcerated young women	S	GT	I	Arts contributed to improvements in patients' confidence, self efficacy, quality of life and community participation.	31	Young women in locked facilities, age 11 - 17
Beasley[3]	Experience of stroke survivors participation in arts health group programmes possible benefits to health and wellbeing	S	GT	I and F	Contributed to knowledge of how to support children when receiving radiation. Music therapy was experienced a positive experience and aided their coping	16	Stroke, aged 43 - 81
Barry (4)	Effect of music therapy CD creation on distress of paediatric oncology patients and coping during first radiation treatment	M	GT	I		11	Children, oncology patients

O'Callaghan (2001) [5]	A music therapy study aimed at understanding patients, visitors and staff experience of a music therapy programme at a cancer hospital	S	GT	O (written responses to brief open ended questions)	A partial, textual insight into the benefit of music therapy in a cancer hospital. Music Therapy had some social and emotional effects on participants. The number of sessions of Music Therapy had scant effect and gender and age of participants affected results.	128	Adult cancer patients
O'Callaghan (2007) [6]	Interpretive subgroup analysis on modified grounded theory research of music therapy in oncology	S	GT	I	The numerical results were not conclusive owing to high variability and small sample size. Qualitative results indicate value of arts therapies. Recommend larger quantitative studies.	128	Adult cancer patients
Odell-Miller [7]	Investigates the arts therapies as a treatment for adults with mental health difficulties	M	GT	I	Art contributed to clients meeting their rehabilitation goals, gaining confidence, enjoyment, planning for future	10	Adult mental health
Symons [8]	Aims to understand the experience of participation in visual art from the perspective of adults undergoing outpatient physical rehab Exploring the helpfulness of arts-based group work for the development of self-awareness and self-esteem in children in foster care	S	GT	I	Findings indicate that children learned new skills, improved coping skills Benefit of arts as complementary to other treatments for post natal depression. Benefit only observed during short term therapy, no longer term benefits noted.	9	Adults neurology
Coholic [9]		S	GT	I and data from group therapy sessions	Visual art plays a role in making a phenomenon understandable and explaining experience	35	Children in foster care
Perry [10]	Creative arts group for parents of toddlers under 2, brief intervention	S	GT	I		18	Parents (9) and professionals (9)
Eggenberger [11]	Giving voice to family caring in cancer: integrating visual art and research findings	S	GT	N		21	Family members of people with cancer

Phenomenology	Aims to describe, interpret and understand the meanings of experiences at both a general and unique level. The research question centres around What it is like to be in or experience a particular situation? This approach focuses on the depth of a particular experience, to describe the qualities of experiences that were lived through. Thematic analysis is undertaken, moving back and forth between whole meanings and part meanings (Holloway 2005)						
Bedding[12]	Retired people's experience of participation in an art class	S	PH	I	Benefit of painting was linked to challenge, a sense of achievement, productivity, boosting confidence Main themes identified as as enjoyment, enthusiasm, excitement, pride, achievement, satisfaction, sense of purpose, mutual support and permanence.	6	Retired adults
Kennett[13]	Exploring the experiences of terminally ill patients taking part in an exhibition of their art work	S	PH	I	Hope was identified as the essence of the phenomenon. A performance of the final script was crafted following dialogue and focus group meetings. The experience of living with metastatic breast cancer was analytically, imaginatively, and personally engaged. Ethical issues and this new research method is explored.	21	Terminally ill patients (10) and facilitators (11)
Sinding[14]	To explore the experience of women with breast cancer involved in creating a drama Handle With Care? Living With Metastatic Breast Cancer	S	PH	I	Music Therapy can help to reestablish patients' ongoing use of music as a health promoting resource and coping strategy in their lives	2	Women with cancer (with artistic director, theatre company and volunteers)
Ansdehl[15]	Effectiveness of music therapy in mental health settings, user perspective	S	PH	I		19	Adult mental health

Reynolds (2011) [16]	Exploring older peoples account regarding strategies for adapting to their participation in visual art making in context of arthritis	S	PH	I	A detailed analysis of the experience of creative occupation. Participants described the flow of art-making, which help to banish intrusive thoughts about cancer, engage in positive journeys and alleviate some stress.	10	Women with cancer aged 62 – 81
Lane[17]	To examine the lived experience of hospitalised patients of arts and healing of 63 participants over a 4-year period.	S	PH	I	The spiritual dimension of arts experience emerged as a key theme for patients. Implications for nursing care is discussed. Art making is a highly valued activity who suggest that methods such as art making can facilitate recovery and self-expression. A key challenge is to better integrate such methods into mental health service delivery.	63	Adults in hospital
Van Lith[18]	Studies mental health consumers' lived experiences of art making within psychosocial rehabilitation services	S	PH	I	Post-stroke interventions need a more occupation-focussed approach, including return to leisure at an earlier stage of stroke rehabilitation. Recreational therapies helped patients overcome the challenges of depression and offered hope for more positive views of themselves	18	Adult mental health
O'Sullivan[19]	To illuminate the experiences of older adults returning to leisure activities, following rehabilitation post-stroke	S	PH	I		5	Older adults with stroke
De Guzman[20]	Traditional Filipino arts among elders in institutionalized care settings	S	PH	I		3	Women, aged 60 + living in residential care
Ethnography	Ethnography studies people in natural surroundings to develop theories about behaviours and culture.						
Howells[21]	Effect of an integrated art studio on the lives of participants	S	E	I and OB and D and O (journal keeping)	Art helped people build new identities and roles, a meaningful activity and a bridge back into the community	20	Adult mental health
Spaniol[22]	Towards an ethnographic approach to art therapy research: people with psychiatric disability as collaborators	S	E	I and OB		unavailable	Adult mental health

Ferrara Montreal[23]	Anthropological study of art therapy with the Northern Quebec Cree people These approaches include a number of techniques for organising and analysing textual data thematically. Content analysis and thematic methods of analysis are general qualitative approaches to identifying themes, rather than in-depth specific methodologies. These approaches are mentioned in a number of studies.	S	E	OB	A comprehensive analysis of the nature of patients' experiences, examining the role of arts and the narrative of individual experience of trauma by Cree individuals.		Adults living in Northern Quebec
Content analysis or thematic analysis							
Gunnarsson[24]	Investigating clients' experiences of taking part in the Tree Theme arts method	S	TA	I	Overarching theme - the client made a journey, engaged in difficult process, the creative interventions offered new life perspectives 4 themes - music is a conduit, music is love, music makes a difference and music gets inside us	20	Adult mental health
Magill[25]	The role of music in palliative care music therapy sessions is analysed	S	TA	I	Themes include hope, positive coping, control, time (this paper accompanies another reporting on the quantitative results)	7	Bereaved caregivers
Robb[26]	To compare patient perceptions regarding the effectiveness of 6 week music sessions with no music sessions. Evaluate the arts for life project for patients and residents with long term illness in nursing homes, using digital artist or music therapy interventions	S	TA	O (song lyrics and post study questionnaire)		6	Bone marrow transplant patients 5 patients, 2 relatives, long term care in nursing homes
Bartel[27]	Exploring how visual arts programme in Australia contributes to recovery in mental health services	S	TA	I	Opportunities to express creativity and individuality. Arts programmes are a medium of expression and self discovery, with spiritual and self empowerment roles	7	Adult mental health
Lloyd[28]	Reflecting on experience of visual art making for women living with cancer	S	TA	I	Themes - creative adventures, distraction from worries, control, achievement, mastery, positive journeys, alleviating stress	8	Adult mental health
Reynolds (2006)[29]	Reflecting on experience of visual art making for women living with cancer	S	TA	I		10	Women with cancer

Greaves[30]	Effects of creative and social activity on the health and well-being of socially isolated older people (various art forms)	M	TA	I and F	Qualitative data showed the programme was well received by participants, reporting social activity, self worth, optimism, positive changes in health behaviour	264	Socially isolated older people
Demecs[31]	Women's experience of attending a creative arts program during their pregnancy, singing, dancing, storytelling and weaving	S	TA	I and O (questionnaires)	Themes included seeking support, sharing together, connecting with each other, myself and the baby, finding balance	7	Pregnant women
Wikstrom[32]	The importance of aesthetic forms of expression in later life - dance, music, literature, pictures	S	TA	I	Arts were found to be intellectual activities, giving a feeling of timelessness, spacelessness and interaction with others	166	Adults over age 65
Secker[33]	Empowerment and arts participation for people with mental health needs.	M	TA	O Qualitative case studies	Arts and mental health initiatives could make an essential contribution to the future of mental health and social care provision, in the context of a growing emphasis on recovery orientated mental health services.	34	Adult mental health
Beaven[34]	Perceptions of participants in a cancer patient support art group	NM	TA	I	Art therapy contributed to positive attitude to life and to coping more effectively	25	Cancer patients
Kincaird[35]	Study of repeated door testing behaviour in a nursing home for people with dementia (with art used to disguise the door)	M	TA	OB and quantitative pre-post testing	Wall murals can be an effective way of cueing residents away from a situation that may evoke agitation and a situation of potential harm and litigation	12	Older adults with dementia
Schofield[36]	To investigate the use of the Snoezelen multisensory environment in palliative day care	M	TA	I	Qualitative data suggested Snoezelen may promote relaxation. Recommendations are made for further research. Scant details of method of data analysis.	26	Older adults (mean age 66.3)
Chen[37]	To explore the perceptions of group music therapy among elderly nursing home residents in Taiwan	S	TA	F	Benefits of music therapy revealed two major themes: (1)strength derived from the group dynamic and (2) enhanced quality of life	17	Older adults (wheelchair users)

					Findings point to the value of community arts and health work and to the importance of a partnership approach. However, current debates regarding evaluation approaches within the field point to the need for clarification regarding values, the use of multiple methodologies and engagement with a diversity of stakeholders		Adults, various community arts and health programme participants
Dooris[38]	To describe the context, process and findings of a qualitative review of Walsall Arts into Health Partnership, UK	M	TA	I, F and O (documentary analysis)		27	
Caspari[39]	This study aimed to describe experts' evaluation and wishes for aesthetics in hospitals. The contribution of arts initiatives to recovery approaches in mental health services	S	TA	I	The aesthetic surroundings are very important for the health and well-being of the patients	16	Adults with expertise in aesthetics
Spandler[40]		S	TA	I and O (questionnaires)	Some evidence of benefit of arts in mental health recovery. Arts helped patients relax, socialise - although more research needed, the benefits reported should not be ignored.	34	Adult mental health
Burton[41]	Assessing the value of offering art therapy activities to patients and carers.	S	TA	I	The patients' perceptions of the study suggest that this approach to art in palliative care is of value. Art has intrinsic value even without being used as a therapy or diversion	8	Adults with cancer (5) and carers (3)
Shaw[42]	Role of sculpture for patients with advanced cancer in palliative care services	S	TA	I		9	Adults cancer
Feen-Calligan[43]	Evaluation of an art therapy program	M	TA	O (evaluations consisted of self-reports by participants to open ended questions)	This brief report presents a practical strategy for evaluating art therapy programmes based on participant evaluations	120	Adults and children receiving art therapy
Arts based methodologies	Arts based methodologies emphasise the visual rather than the verbal (for example children may be able to paint to express their views more easily than using words) (Rapport, Wainwright et al. 2005) as well as new methodologies such as drama based action research.						

Broadbent[44]	Investigating whether drawings could be a useful way to assess patients perceptions of headaches	S	O (survey instrument plus drawings of pain)	O (mainly statistical analysis of questionnaire plus analysis of drawings)	Drawings offer an additional way to assess peoples' experience of their headaches and reflect illness perceptions and distress. Drawings may be a useful way for clinicians to understand patients' experience of pain. Limited information about process of analysing drawings.	65	University students who experience persistent headaches
Lee[45]	Examines the use of popular theatre as a methodology when investigating experiences of exclusion for racialised minority girls	S	T (popular theatre as a research methodology)	O (Various methods such as discussion, arts and theatre were used to develop a narrative of the experience. The performance of theatre before an audience of peers is a way of validating and making visible experiences) O (Discussions, observations, improvisation by playwright, actors and researchers. 6 performances were evaluated, these were given to 100 people with dementia and their families)	Popular theatre is developing as an alternative and promising research methodology. However, many methodological dilemmas arose during this project.	10	Girls age 14 - 18
Mitchell[46]	A team of researchers, artists, and actors create a research based drama about living with dementia, based on data from service users	S	T		The experience of viewing the play illuminated the experience of people with dementia	100	Adults with dementia and their families

						The arts offer a way for researchers and research participants to examine their lived experience, to reflect creatively upon this, and to know themselves more deeply. A very different practice from that of the researcher selecting snippets from various interviews and piecing them together to tell a particular tale from his or her own perspective. The arts process validated findings from more conventional research methods.		Women, parents participating in a support programme for mothers of children under 5
Foster[47]	To reflect on a participatory, arts based research project carried out at a Sure Start programme in North West England.	S	O (using arts, drama, creative writing over 2 year period to tell the narrative of participants experience)	O (Through creating art work, poems and short films, participants are able to construct their stories for themselves)			6	
Lind[48]	Describes a research project studying the strengths of adolescent girls in an open custody treatment group home Describing an account of a person's experience in the form of a story or narrative account	S	T	OB and O (theatre techniques)		Arts-based research and participatory action research offer new ways of accessing marginalized populations' strengths and challenging harmful societal assumptions	1	Adolescent girl in an open custody treatment group home.
Narrative approach								
Stuckey[49]	Role of creative expression in diabetes, visual digital art	S	TA	I and O (analysis using art processes)		3 key themes emerged - putting a positive spin on illness to make meaning, meaning making in patient care and experiencing negative emotions	8	Women with type 1 diabetes
No method given								
Forzoni[50]	To assess whether patients perceive art therapy as helpful during chemotherapy sessions	S	N	I		Art therapy may be useful to support patients during the stressful time of chemotherapy treatment	54	Cancer patients
Griffiths [51]	Arts and creativity qualitative study of mental health promotion tool for young African and Caribbean men	S	N	I and F		Arts may be useful as a health promotion tool for this client group	unavailable	Young African and Caribbean men with mental health issues
Gallagher[52]	Evaluating project for patients and residents with long term illness in nursing homes, using music therapy and digital art interventions	NM	N	I		Findings of benefit should be interpreted with caution given the small sample, larger scale research recommended	7	Patients/residents of long term nursing homes (5) and their families (2)

Twardzicki[53]	Role of performing arts in challenging stigma around mental illness	M	N	O (qualitative questionnaire and attitude questionnaire)	3 years of data shows a successful approach to influencing attitudes and empathy around mental health and feelings of service users achievement, mood, confidence and inclusion.	126	Young adult students (34) Mental health clients (43) audiences (57) tutors (4)
Philipp[54]	Research into the health benefits of writing poetry.	S	N	O (written comments invited from general public)	Writing poetry was reported to provide a useful outlet for their emotions, to manage anxiety, depression, dying and bereavement, post-traumatic stress, eating disorders, and sexual abuse.	218	Adults, general public

Notes

GT - Primary Methodology GT (Grounded theory)

PH -

Phenomenology

E - Ethnography

T - Theatre action research based methods

TA - Thematic or content analysis

O – Other

N - No method given

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