

Creative Arts Therapies Transform Care and Wellness

For many, art, music, dance, drama and poetry are ways to escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.



Here at NYC Health + Hospitals, these forms of creativity hold more clinical importance when incorporated into our patients' treatment plans.

To celebrate National Creative Arts Therapies Week and to highlight the role, our health system held its first annual Creative Arts Therapies Conference last week at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur. Nearly 170 system-wide health care staff member gathered to celebrate and learn more about the cutting-edge work of our Licensed Creative Arts Therapists.

Across 13 of our facilities, we have 117 Licensed Creative Arts Therapists - the largest concentration

of any health system in the nation - working to transform the care and wellness of nearly 2,000 patients and their families.

"Mental health professionals and experts agree that Creative Arts Therapies have many benefits," said Dr. Charles Barron, NYC Health + Hospitals Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Office of Behavioral Health. "Art, music, dance/movement, drama and poetry therapies are some of the most fluid therapeutic approaches, as they can support both verbal and nonverbal patients."

The purpose of Creative Arts Therapies is to help patients improve their self-management and problem-solving skills while providing a means of addressing past traumas, reducing stress and building self-esteem. The goal is also to alleviate patients' symptoms for both acute and chronic mental and behavioral health challenges.





Video from the first-annual Creative Arts Therapies Week Conference on March 19 at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Gouverneur.

“Art and creativity are fundamental to human expression and everyone can relate to their healing effects. Creative Arts Therapies concepts and methods have the power and potential to transform the lives of patients, communities at large and the overarching health care delivery system, as these specialized services can be applied to any patient population and can meet the needs of any service or setting,” said Jeremy Segall, MA, RDT, LCAT, the conference’s chair and Senior Director, System Performance Improvement in the Office of Quality & Safety.

The conference featured presentations from several of our therapists including: Music Therapist Nir Sadovnik of NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull; Drama Therapist Dana Trottier of NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County; Dance/Movement Therapist Laura Raffa and Art Therapist Lesley Achitoff of NYC Health + Hospitals/Correctional Health Services; Music Therapist Frank Wagner of NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull; Art Therapist Ann Ellen Goldstein of NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue and Music Therapist Jenna Wood of NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County.

At the conference, Trottier presented a drama embodiment exercise with an actor portraying a patient in distress to show how drama therapy can be used to help staff respond to difficult situations.



Conference Steering Team from left to right: Milica Ramirez, NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue; Frances Fawundu, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull; Gary Hara, NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi; Jeremy Segall, Office of Quality & Safety; Carlos J. Rodriguez Perez, NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County; & Gianna Lafronza, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull

“Creative arts therapists are able to adapt their creative interventions to meet the needs and readiness of their clients,” said Trottier. “Given the collaborative nature of theater, I collaborate with my clients to co-create treatment spaces that are grounded in a shared reality of acceptance, mutuality, creativity and humanity.”

The conference was made possible thanks to two corporate sponsors: the North American Drama Therapy Association and the New York State Chapter of the American Dance Therapy Association. This work will continue to be led by an interdisciplinary Steering Team made up of a mix of Licensed Creative Arts Therapists from a variety of NYC Health + Hospitals facilities in order to share best practices.

We welcome your feedback!
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