

FROM PSYCHOSIS TO REMISSION THROUGH ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

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Introduction: Group music/art therapy in patients with schizophrenia may not contribute to the treatment outcome but it certainly offers an opportunity to monitor patient's progress during psychiatric treatment. In our case we followed the patient's improvement through ten drawings.

Case report: A 24-year-old female psychology student was admitted to our hospital for the first time. She presented with unusual *posturing*, mannerisms, disorganized speech, auditory hallucinations, and paranoid delusions. According to her mother, the symptoms started about two years prior to the hospitalization. She was unsuccessfully treated with olanzapine at maximum dose. Additional treatment with a maximum dose of amisulpride also proved unsuccessful. After switching her to clozapine and aripiprazole her behavior normalized and the psychotic symptoms subsided. Because of epileptic seizures as a side effect of clozapine treatment she was given valproic acid. She achieved solid remission and was transferred to the day hospital. As an inpatient she attended group music/art therapy sessions once a week. At the beginning her drawings were abstract, disorganized and perseverative. As her mental status improved, her drawings became more and more realistic.

Conclusion: While it is difficult to imagine the way someone with a mental illness perceives the world, drawings produced by the mentally ill offer a hint of this experience. In itself, realistic expression is not 'better' than abstraction; moreover, it could be ventured that in her early drawings our patient was more responsive to musical stimuli than later when her regaining control produced more organized but also more schematic and stereotypical drawings.