

# **ARTS & HEALTHCARE**

## **STRENGTHENING OUR NATION'S HEALTHCARE THROUGH THE ARTS**

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### **ACTION NEEDED**

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**We urge Members of Congress to:**

- **Request the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study to assess the current status of federal support of creative arts in healthcare programs to improve the quality of healthcare services.**
- **Fund research to increase access to creative arts in healthcare programs addressing older Americans, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, autism, and others through federal health programs.**
- **Ensure that national healthcare insurance reform proposals include artists and other creative occupations currently excluded from employer-based insurance plans.**

### **BACKGROUND**

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Arts in healthcare is a multidisciplinary field dedicated to improving the healthcare experience for patients, families, and caregivers. This rapidly growing field integrates the arts, including literary, performing, visual arts and design, into a wide variety of healthcare settings for therapeutic, educational, and recreational purposes. Research confirms that the arts enhance coping thereby reducing patients' need for hospital care, pain medication, and associated costs. In addition, the arts reduce patients' level of depression and situational anxiety, contribute to patient satisfaction, and improve the medical provider's recruitment and retention rates.

Clinical areas currently demanding increased attention within the U.S. healthcare system include military veterans diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the aging baby boomer population, and individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Healthcare research outcomes for interventions by creative arts practices demonstrate improved quality and effectiveness of care, enhanced psychosocial and physical health, decreased agitation, increased response to rehabilitation treatment, and improved caregiver coping skills. Research related to persons with autism reveals a growing strength of evidence using specific creative arts interventions on improving outcomes such as social and communication skills. This research includes systematic reviews of scientific literature and robust research designs including randomized clinical trials.

Research in the use of creative arts in healthcare includes creative arts therapies interventions, population specific creativity studies, healthcare facility design, and environment of care measures across multiple medical conditions, disabilities, and wellness/prevention programs. Data sources across a wide spectrum conclude that creative arts applications have a positive impact on quality of life and demonstrate that creative arts interventions provide a marked benefit through cost savings potential and improved response to health and wellness programs.

In addition to the study of creative arts practices on structure, processes, and outcomes in healthcare setting, creative arts practitioners work in diverse settings across a wide spectrum of populations, literally serving persons from cradle to grave. Besides private for-profit and nonprofit health facilities, settings include, but are not limited to, hospice programs, long-term care facilities, mental health programs, schools, rehabilitation treatment centers, special needs camps, disaster response teams, psychiatric forensic units, VA facilities, prisons, community centers, wellness programs, and military bases.

Current federal statutes provide opportunities to address this quality of care issue—such as the Older Americans Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as well as various research activities at the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and the Healthy People 2020 effort at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. There is need to increase access to these services by expanding the list of creative art treatments eligible for reimbursement through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Finally, as the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress begins, we urge members of Congress to tackle the immensely pressing issue of healthcare reform. The cultural workforce and other individuals with nontraditional employment relationships are locked out of group healthcare coverage options, making health insurance significantly more expensive, more difficult to obtain, and harder to navigate. Artists are disproportionately self-employed, and those who are not often work multiple jobs in volatile, episodic patterns.

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## TALKING POINTS

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In these difficult economic times, it is imperative to explore cost effective options for delivery of quality healthcare services. Employment of creative artists may fill gaps caused by reductions in healthcare staff due to rising healthcare delivery costs.

### Quality Care

- A GAO study would provide a much needed status report on creative arts in healthcare programs in our federal healthcare system. Presently, such an assessment has never been conducted. As Congress moves toward healthcare reform, members should be empowered to make policy decisions based on research and driven by systematic data collection relating to the condition of healthcare and the arts, the practices that improve service delivery, and the effectiveness of federal support of creative arts in healthcare programs.
- Further study of the impact of arts in healthcare programs in a variety of treatment settings shows great promise. The aged, our veterans, and individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum are critical populations whose treatments require our nation's thoughtful consideration.
- Several studies on the creative arts in healthcare have shown links to the following trends:
  - Reduced length of hospital stay; fewer medical visits
  - Improved patient compliance during medical procedures
  - Reduced use of pain and anti-anxiety medications
  - Improved recovery time and therefore reduced need for higher levels of acute care
  - Reductions in wandering and/or agitated states
  - Reduced incidence of depression
  - Decreased use of medical interventions covered by Medicare among the aging population who are engaged in the arts

### Improved Cost Control

- Economic analyses and cost studies show a positive trend with respect to the use of creative arts practices in containing healthcare costs.
- The creative arts offer an innovative solution for addressing some of the cost containment concerns in healthcare such as length of stay, patient compliance and staff retention.
- The secondary benefits of creative arts in healthcare settings are a consistently higher level of consumer (patient) and caregiver satisfaction results. This includes positive trends on caregiver (staff) recruitment and retention.

### Critical Need for Healthcare Coverage

- Coverage and access to health insurance is particularly challenging for the independent worker, including those in the arts and culture sector, who do not have access to group plans provided by traditional employers. This lack of insurance coverage also deters those interested in joining this field, affecting the strength of the workforce. Those in the creative industry, as for all Americans, deserve reform initiatives that offer affordable and accessible healthcare.
- The creative arts in healthcare community is encouraged by President Obama's early statement on artists and healthcare reform and see the creative arts as being an integral part of healthcare delivery.