

## The Arts in Medicine and Health: A Necessity for Evidence-Based Health Systems

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**Abstract :** This contribution reviews the current biomedical and qualitative arts research on arts-in-health interventions to improve both individual and population health outcomes. Arts therapies—for example, music therapy with roots in Aristoxenus’s Ἀρμονικὰ στοιχεῖα and the Pythagorean sect—have long been employed in therapeutic contexts. However, the 20th century witnessed the increasing use of the visual and plastic arts (drawing, painting, sculpting), performing arts (drama and dance), and other expressive arts modalities into occupational therapy, well-being medicine, and psychological and psychiatric counselling, diagnosis, and treatment. A significant body of peer-reviewed evidence in the medical and neurological sciences on the role of arts-in-health has developed, and specifically, research on music and art therapy has led to their inclusion within the current biomedical paradigm of evidence-based practice. The arts cannot only aid in public and population health promotion (promoting healthy behaviors and lifestyles, preventing disease onset) but also in addressing psychological issues (regulation of emotion; stress, anxiety, and depression reduction), behavioural issues (basic life skills, coping), and physiological response (immune system function, hormonal regulation, homeostasis). Working as a cross-disciplinary researcher in the arts in an American medical college, the author has developed several successful arts-in-health programs at the national and international level.

**Keywords :** arts-in-health, evidence based medicine, arts for health, expressive arts therapies

**Conference Title :** ICAHSS 2024 : International Conference on Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

**Conference Location :** Algiers, Algeria

**Conference Dates :** March 25-26, 2024