

# Review of: "Provision of creative arts interventions in UK drug and alcohol services: A cross-sectional study"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article deals with an interesting yet understudied topic within the field of clinical interventions for substance use disorders. The participant recruitment and data collection process appears well-designed and well-executed. The paper maybe suffers a bit, though, from a missing research objective, missing theoretical concept, nearly completely missing references to existing research in the field, unaddressed methodological issues, generalizability problems, and overstatement of implications of the results.

So, personally, I am at all not sure of what to do with the results; but as a non-UK citizen, I might be missing some reference points which are evident to readers from the UK and guide interpretation.

Some details:

## METHODS:

The construction process of the questionnaire is described very sparsely. Moreover, the instrument seemingly was not tested in a pilot phase to check for e.g. possible comprehension problems. Quality criteria (objectivity, reliability, validity) are not mentioned.

I can nowhere find the exact wording of the questions. Would it be possible to present the questionnaire in an appendix? Did providers receive a clear definition of what the researchers mean by "creative arts interventions" or by "qualified provider"? Or was this needless?

The authors should discuss the 12% (93/762, but maybe the denominator should be chosen differently) participation rate. "caution should be maintained" is a nearly meaningless claim which leaves the complete responsibility to the reader. Which caution, and why? Is it an unusually high or low rate for this kind of study? And how might it actually affect the validity and generalizability of the results?

In my opinion, it is essential for the interpretation of results to compare participants with non-participants. Can both groups not be characterized with respect e.g. to region, size of the city, other services provided, type of sponsorship, number of employees? What would dissimilarities between non-/participants mean with respect to bias and generalizability of results?

## RESULTS:

In table 1, numbers for Q9 and Q10, respectively, do not add up, e.g. Q9:  $33+11+0=48$ ?

The authors could maybe analyse and present how many different kinds of arts interventions are provided per treatment provider, and which combinations are typical.

The authors could contemplate whether to cross-tabulate results from the questionnaire with provider characteristics (if available, e.g. larger versus smaller institutions; funding source etc.).

## DISCUSSION:

The discussion section suffers from the lack of a clear research objective and of a theoretical background, and could also profit from a bit more critical approach to creative arts interventions. There is no in-depth discussion of the methodological problems (dubious representativeness, unknown quality of the questionnaire).

In their discussion, the authors state “The results of this study indicate that nonpharmacological interventions are already a core part of the drug and alcohol treatment provision”. This is a bit heroic, given that only a small number of institutions did participate, and that it is completely unknown how representative the participating institutions are for the non-participants. Moreover, even in the present sample, less than one in 4 institutions provides creative arts intervention by staff with formal qualifications for it.

The authors further state “Services intent on providing a holistic recovery service are likely to want to include creative arts activities and therapies in their provision if funding and staffing levels permit.” I have difficulties to find the empirical base of this statement in the present paper.

It is interesting that less than half of providers of creative arts do have staff with “appropriate formal qualification”. Unfortunately, the possible reason and the implications of this is not further discussed.

Another interesting result (at least in my opinion)

### Minor remark

One decimal place in the display of percentages would be sufficient. Two decimals do not provide additional information here and are distracting.