

The art of good health

April 29 2014, by David Stacey



(Medical Xpress)—Engaging in the arts for enjoyment, entertainment or as a hobby can be good for your mental, social and physical wellbeing, according to researchers at The University of Western Australia.

The award-winning study, published in *BMJ Open*, is the first internationally to look at the link between general [population health](#) and [arts](#) engagement.

Researchers found that engaging in the arts as part of everyday life, such as listening to music, reading, painting, dancing, playing a musical instrument, creative writing and attending arts events could make a difference to the health of individuals and the community.

Lead author and PhD candidate Christina Davies said good mental health was the foundation for individual and community wellbeing. "In this study, arts engagement was found to make people feel happy, reduced their stress and resulted in the creation of good memories," Ms Davies said.

"Study participants also felt the arts gave their life more meaning, helped them meet new people, reduced social isolation and broadened their ideas and beliefs. The arts also had an impact on general knowledge, identity and resulted in physical activity such as walking and performance-based movement.

"Given the significant pressure on our health system, the arts may hold the key to a new type of health promotion and healing."

Ms Davies said the study, which won an Arts and Health Australia Award for Excellence in November last year, provided 63 new insights into the relationship between the arts and population health and was a step towards the development of a causal arts and health model.

The ground-breaking research is part of the "Healthy Arts?" study to look at the relationship between arts engagement and [health](#) in the general population and was funded by Healthway.

More information: "The art of being healthy: a qualitative study to develop a thematic framework for understanding the relationship between health and the arts." Christina R Davies, Matthew Knuiman, Peter Wright, Michael Rosenberg. *BMJ Open* 2014;4:4 e004790 [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2014-004790](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-004790)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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