

Canadian doctors to start prescribing museum visits

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A group of Canadian doctors are to begin prescribing trips to an art gallery to help patients suffering a range of ailments become a picture of health.

A partnership between the Francophone Association of Doctors in Canada (MFdC) and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) will allow patients suffering from a number of physical and [mental health issues](#), along with their loved ones, to take in the benefits of art on health with free visits.

The [pilot project](#) is unprecedented globally, according to its organizer.

The project will see participating physicians prescribe up to 50 visits to the MMFA during treatment, each pass valid for up to two adults and two minors.

So far 100 doctors have enrolled to take part over the course of a year, Nicole Parent, head of the MFdC, told AFP Thursday.

The numbers offer proof that [doctors](#) have "a sensitivity and openness to alternative approaches if you want" Parent said, citing scientifically proven benefits of art on health.

The benefits are similar to those patients can get from physical activity, prompting the secretion of a similar level of feel-good hormones, and can help with everything from chronic pain to depression, stress and anxiety.

The pilot program will allow organizers to gather data and analyze results, allowing for the development of protocol for identifying patients.

Parent said she hopes other museums in Canada will follow the lead of the MMFA, which since 2016 has cultivated expertise in art therapy for people with a variety of health ailments.

"I am convinced that in the 21st century, culture will be what [physical activity](#) was for health in the 20th century," said MMFA director Nathalie Bondil in a statement.

"Cultural experiences will benefit [health](#) and wellness, just as engaging in sports contributes to fitness," she said.

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