

**Long Term Medical Art Therapy: Influence on Quality of Life, Functional Capacity and Compliance in Advanced Heart Failure Patients**

*Sela, N; Baruch, N; Stein, R; Yaari, V; Pinchas, A; Battler, A; Ben Gal, T  
Rabin Medical Center, Petah Tikva, Israel*

Background: Medical Art Therapy (MAT) enables sick people to express in art their mental state. Loss of hope and feelings of frustration, fear and anxiety, common in heart failure (HF), negatively affect pts' quality of life and compliance.

The Aim of the present study was to evaluate the influence of MAT on quality of life, functional capacity, anxiety, depression and compliance to medical therapy of pts with advanced HF.

Methods: Between December 2007 and July 2008, ten advanced HF pts were assigned to 24 weekly MAT sessions guided by a MAT therapist (N.S.).

The following parameters were recorded at baseline, after 12 and 24 weeks: the Ulman Personality Assessment Procedure (a MAT diagnostic tool), the Minnesota Living with HF questionnaire score, The European HF self-care Behavior Scale (measuring compliance), Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), and Six Minuets Walk Test.

From the ten pts, one patient died, one underwent heart transplantation, one was hospitalized for more that a month due to acute decompensated HF and one pt dropped out due to personal problems between weeks 12 and 24. Data obtained at 12 weeks is presented.

Results: In response to MAT, the Ulman score significantly improved (from  $97.6 \pm 13$  to  $133 \pm 12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and there was a trend towards improvement in pts' compliance as manifested by the improvement in the European HF self-care Behavior Scale (from  $35 \pm 6.7$  to  $30 \pm 4.6$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ).

The changes in Minnesota Living with HF questionnaire score (from  $72 \pm 15$  to  $67 \pm 14$ ), the HADS score (from  $27 \pm 6.5$  to  $30 \pm 3.4$ ), and six minute walk test (from  $413 \pm 38$  to  $490 \pm 55$ ) did not reach statistical significance.

Conclusions: Even the very sick pts with advanced HF may improve their MAT skills. Long term MAT tends to improve compliance to medical therapy and should be a part of the therapeutic arsenal in every HF clinic.

The influence of MAT on quality of life, functional capacity, anxiety and depression of pts with advanced HF needs to be assessed in larger studies.