

Retrospective reflections on dance programs for children with neurological impairments: from conception to recommendations

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Introduction : Neurological disorders such as cerebral palsy or neuropathy have impacts on motor and sometimes cognitive functions as well as on psychosocial aspects. Dance can be used as an adjunct therapy to improve these functions. Over the last few years, four dance programs were developed and implemented in a pediatric rehabilitation context. These programs aimed at improving motor, cognitive and psychosocial dimensions in children with neurological disorders.

Method : The dance programs were 10 to 12 weeks long (60 minutes per session, two sessions a week) and included various types of dance. These programs were specifically adapted to the need of children with cerebral palsy (1 program, n=20) or neuropathy (3 programs, n=13). Dance sessions were provided by physiotherapists, adapted dance teachers and a dance researcher. Motor, cognitive and psychosocial dimensions were evaluated before and after each dance program. Following these four programs, a focus group was held with the people involved in the development and implementation of the programs in order to identify facilitating factors and barriers of using dance as an adjunct therapy in pediatric rehabilitation.

Results / Discussion: Based on the results obtained on the motor, cognitive and psychosocial dimensions, we have identified factors that can explain the benefits observed in our different projects as well as limiting factors. These factors were related to the design of the program, its content and the evaluation of its effects. We will propose recommendations for developing, implementing and evaluating a dance program for children with neurological impairments.