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Dance therapy improves self-body image among obese patients

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Abstract

Objectives: Obesity and disturbed eating behaviors are both associated with low self-esteem and distorted body images. The aim of this study was to assess the influence of a dance therapy program on the evolution of mental representations linked to body image among obese patients. Changes in body image were evaluated in terms of four parameters: physical, psychological, cognitive, and social.

Methods: In total, 18 obese patients were enrolled in a longitudinal dance therapy workshop (DTW) program lasting 36 weeks. Patients danced for two hours per week and were evaluated three times: at baseline, after 18 weeks, and at the end of the study (36 weeks). Evaluation was performed using questionnaires addressing health-related quality of life, sensorial-motor perception, and mental representations linked to body schema and self-body image.

Results: Obese patients enrolled in the DTW displayed a significant improvement in health-related quality of life ($p < 0.03$), body consciousness ($p < 0.001$), and mental representations linked to self body image ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: DTW allowed obese patients to reset both their somatic and psychic consciousness of their body image.

Practice implication: Patients are usually reluctant to practice physical activity. Dance therapy improves not only body image, but also psycho-social aspects of their personality.