Unique study by psychologists

Art therapy can help dementia sufferers

Experimental psychologists Dr Jenny Rusted (on the left of picture) and Linda Sheppard (on the right) from BIOLS have just completed the first study in the UK evaluating the impact of art psychotherapy on people with dementia.

Funded by the PPP Foundation, an independent healthcare charitable foundation, the study followed 45 elderly people with dementia for 13 months in four care homes in Sussex.

One group received art psychotherapy, while a control group received regular recreational activity. Measures of the patients' mood, mental capacity and physical competency were taken throughout the period of the study.

"What we found was that, initially, any activity improves the participants' sense of involvement and their mood," says Jenny. "Then, within about 10 weeks, the recreational group peaked and levelled off; whereas the art therapy group continued upwards on all of the scales."

Although those in the art therapy group started off with a fair amount of negative feeling towards the art therapy approach, there was a slow but continuous rise in mood, sociability and physical involvement.

For some this was demonstrated through increased eye contact or by attempting to move towards the objects on the table, while others made statements such as "I'm going to do this next week", showing a sense of future and purpose.

"What the art therapist is doing is helping the person with dementia to adapt to their changing emotions in terms of the loss of their cognitive skills and perhaps their self-esteem and sense of identity," explains Linda. "What we're trying to do is look at ways of broadening resources for people with dementia to improve their quality of living."

Carers commented that, despite their own initial reluctance, they had witnessed marked improvements in the behaviour of the dementia sufferers between sessions.

"There was something subtle that happened in the art therapy group - a quality of emotional interaction," says Linda. "The art therapists would say that this was due to the emotional expression they were encouraging."

"At the beginning of the art therapy, one person said to me about being in the home, 'Everyone seems really pleased to see me, but nobody really talks to me,'" says Linda. "By the end of the project, two people in the art therapy group who were both very cognitively impaired began to recognise each other outside the group and then gradually to spend more time together."

Jenny and Linda handled the experimental side of the project, which was a collaboration with Diane Weller, Professor in Art Therapy at Goldsmiths College in London.

They presented their findings earlier this summer at the International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders, organised by the Alzheimer's Association in Stockholm.

---

Most teachers find one class of schoolchildren enough of a handful. But yesterday (5 September) a Nobel Prize-winning scientist single-handedly took on 125 kids from five different primary schools across Britain.

Some of the children came from just round the corner, in Coldean. But others were hundreds of miles away in Scotland and Wales.

When Professor Sir Harry Kroto used video conferencing technology to introduce them to the excitement of chemistry, each child had the opportunity to make their own model of a carbon structure.

To help Sir Harry distinguish between each school, the pupils from Brighton, Leicester, Cardiff, Farnborough (Kent) and Edinburgh were given different coloured polo shirts for the virtual science workshop.

The innovative workshop was part of the Inspire project, a national education initiative that aims to utilise individuals with exceptional talent and vision in the fields of science and arts education to inspire others via outreach projects throughout the country.

Poet Laureate Andrew Motion started his Inspire tour in May, visiting teachers and pupils at British schools to promote poetry in the curriculum and inspire creativity in the classroom.

Sir Harry is an internationally renowned scientist who won a Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1996 for the co-discovery of new forms of carbon - called fullerences - in which the atoms are arranged in closed shells. He chairs the Vega Science Trust, an educational charity that he founded to enable scientists to communicate directly using TV and the Internet.

The Inspire initiative is organised by NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology & the Arts) and aims to pioneer the use of modern communications technology for the science and arts education of Key Stage 2 children (aged 7-11).
**Sussex joins Earth Summit debate**

Environmental experts from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) have contributed to the debate raised by the Earth Summit, which finished this week in Johannesburg.

The Environment Group at IDS criticise the World Bank's report on 'Sustainable Development in a Dynamic Economy' as presenting a 'one-sided reading of the challenges of achieving sustainable development in a context of globalisation'.

Their comments are part of a series of articles published by the Bretton Woods Project and the Heinrich Bell Foundation reviewing the World Bank report.

"The World Bank report demonstrates a greater awareness of the key role of government intervention," says Dr Peter Newell, Research Fellow in IDS.

"But we have to be aware of the many interests that benefit from unsustainable development that are currently in the driving seat and whose cooperation is critical if the summit is to be a success."

The IDS team also argues that the World Bank report "would be more credible if the Bank acknowledged its own past mistakes" and that "market-driven solutions... are often evoked as the only way to deal with environmental problems."

"Although the report takes several positive steps in the right direction it seems that without tackling issues head on, subsequent World Development reports will continue to give out mixed messages without really satisfying anyone," they conclude.

---

**Cognitive effects of treatments for cancer**

Researchers at Sussex are appealing for volunteers on campus to help them investigate treatments for two of the commonest forms of cancer.

Dr Val Jenkins and her colleagues in the Psychosocial Oncology Group are carrying out two studies of the potential effects that treatments for breast cancer and prostate cancer may have on patients' cognition - in particular, on memory and attention.

The first project is a study of 100 women receiving chemotherapy for the treatment of breast cancer, as well as 50 women with breast cancer who are not receiving chemotherapy and 50 healthy women (known as a 'control group').

If you are a healthy woman between the ages of about 45 and 65, you could help the researchers by joining this control group. Over the course of 18 months you would be asked to take part in three tests of cognitive ability (including tasks such as trying to repeat a string of numbers), each session lasting about an hour.

The second project is looking at the effect on cognitive function of hormonal treatment for men with prostate cancer.

A control group of 30 healthy men between the ages of 55 and 75 will complete three assessments - looking at memory, attention, mood and IQ - over a period of one year.

The researchers visit cancer patients at home but would see participants in the control group on campus if at all possible. All data is confidential and individual cases are not analysed.

If you fit the bill for either study and would be willing to help, email vs.jenkins@biols.susx.ac.uk or call ext. 3036.

---

**Physicists meet to discuss $170 million project**

Physicists from all over the world will meet next week at Sussex to discuss the latest developments in a $170 million project called MINOS.

The MINOS (Main Injector Neutrino Oscillation Search) project studies the properties of sub-atomic particles called neutrinos by sending a beam of them through the ground from a site near Chicago to a huge detector over 400 miles away in northern Minnesota.

"We're responsible for the energy calibration of the detector," says Dr Philip Harris, Senior Lecturer in Physics in CPES. "We designed and built a system that uses ultra-bright LEDs and 200km of optical fibres to help us do this."

Sussex is one of only three UK universities to be participating in the MINOS project, and around 60 members of the project will meet at Sussex from 12-16 September to discuss their progress.

The detector (left) resembles an enormous loaf of sliced bread, the weight of a battlefield, built half a mile underground, accessed only via a narrow 19th-century mine shaft. Huge hexagonal steel plates, 25 ft across, are interleaved with a special plastic that emits tiny flashes of light when charged particles pass through.

Of the billions of neutrinos that pass through it, only a tiny fraction will interact, creating a small shower of particles that can be detected by measuring these little flashes of light.
The undergraduate recruitment and admissions process for the coming academic year is now essentially complete, and the outcome is encouraging. We went in to Clearing, but not in all subjects, and in a large number of Arts subjects only to fill a very few vacant places. As always, recruitment and admissions in Science is more difficult, but there were encouraging headlines here too, such as the high quality of the Physics intake and a Mathematics intake that was larger than expected, against a background of well-publicised national difficulties in recruitment to Mathematics degrees.

The University mounted a striking advertising campaign during Clearing. The theme was (in my view) a risky one, referring to the University's 1960s image as a politically radical institution. Feedback on the advertising campaign has been positive and more would be appreciated by the Director of Communications, Rob Read (r.k.read@sussex.ac.uk).

It is pleasing that we have had such a good outcome this year, because there were two potential problems. But neither the continued uncertainty about the government's plans for student funding nor the fact that this is the last year of the 'old' Arts curriculum seem to have adversely affected our intake.

It is too early to make confident predictions about the overseas and graduate intakes but all the signs are positive there too. I would like to thank everyone – academic, administrative and support staff – whose hard work has contributed to this good outcome.

We still have some way to go before we can be entirely comfortable with our position in the recruitment market-place, but we now have an excellent base on which to make further progress. Early indications, for example from open days, are that the new Arts curriculum will be very attractive to potential students. We need to do our best over the next six months to ensure that next year's outcome is even better. At the very least, we should aim not to be in Clearing next year for any Arts programmes.

Alongside the existing Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Dr Mary Stuart and Professor Nigel Llewellyn, I have appointed Professor John Dearlove as PVC with responsibility for student recruitment. John will be leading new initiatives in recruitment, across the full range of subjects, at graduate as well as undergraduate level, and for overseas as well as home students. He is open to ideas on what we should be doing over the coming year (j.n.dearlove@sussex.ac.uk).

Early discussions in the Strategic Restructuring Group have identified the development of the strategy for Science at Sussex as a key priority. Top-class research departments should attract high-quality students, and need to attract high-quality students. Lowering entry standards may seem the appropriate response to recruitment difficulties, but it is a self-defeating response, because entry standards are one of the best indicators that potential students get of the quality of a degree programme. I think that raising entry standards to our undergraduate Science programmes must be a central element of our strategy. It has risks, as the new Arts curriculum has risks. But a time when our overall position is becoming stronger is the time to be bold.
Flexible friend pays for bouncy playground

Three-year-old Matthew Wright (pictured left) is delighted with the new play area at the University Nursery. “It’s soft,” he says, and speeds off on his scooter.

The play area was enlarged and resurfaced this summer. “It’s bigger and bouncy,” explains Rosie Jones, the Nursery Supervisor. “Although the grass area we have is lovely, the new play area will be better in winter when the weather isn’t so good.”

The spacious and springy safety surface was financed with income from the University’s Bank of Scotland credit card: each time a card holder makes a purchase, the bank donates a percentage to the University.

The University of Sussex MasterCard has generated more than £65,000 for campus welfare services since it was launched in 1991 and has been taken up by almost 1,700 alumni and members of staff. It offers an attractive interest rate with no annual fee.

As well as funding the resurfacing of the Nursery play area, income from the card has been used this year to make a contribution to the Lorne Duncan Fund, which helps overseas students in financial difficulties and was set up in 1999 with a gift from a former Sussex student.

Sharay Chakanyuka has just completed her doctorate in USIE with the assistance of a grant from the Lorne Duncan Fund. She said: “At the time I received the grant, I had not registered because I had no money to do so. The grant gave me a lifeline and while I still had to raise money for my fees and accommodation, I have been able to successfully complete my studies. I thank the sponsors for helping me to achieve a lifetime ambition.”

Matthew Wright will have to wait a few years before he can have a University of Sussex MasterCard. But if you’re 18 or over, you could raise money for campus services at no cost to yourself. To apply for the standard card, contact the freephone number 0800 731 2239, quoting reference ACDH; for the platinum card, phone 0800 328 1001, quoting reference ACEH.

Staff vacancies
Apply by 11 September
Fitness Instructor (Female), Sports Service (ref 434)
Receptionist, Sports Service (ref 439)
Apply by 12 September
Secondary PCGE Teaching ICT (0.2 FTE, ref 428)
Clerical Assistant, Undergraduate Office (ref 453)
Supervisor, Catering Services (ref 119b)
Chef De Patisserie, Catering Services (ref 120b)
Graduate Teacher Programme & Assessment Secretary (ref 446)
Apply by 13 September
Finance Supervisor, Students’ Union (ref 449)
Tea Bar Assistant, SMS (ref 458)
Clerical Assistant, Computing Service (ref 461)

Apply by 16 September
Reader, Senior Lecturer or Lecturer, BIOLS (ref 433)
Research Fellow, Genome Damage & Stability Centre (ref 435)
Apply by 17 September
Research Fellow, Brighton & Sussex Medical School (ref 122b)
Project Co-ordinator, Brighton & Sussex Medical School (ref 121b)
Apply by 19 September
Finance Assistant, Research Services Division (ref 438)
Apply by 20 September
Conference Organiser, Centre for German Jewish Studies (p/t, ref 448)
Research Fellow, COGS (ref 118b)
Research Fellow, COGS (ref 117b)
Reader, Senior Lecturer or Lecturer in Computer Science, COGS (ref 454)
Clerical Assistant, Staff Development Unit (ref 452)
Schools Liaison Officer, Schools & Colleges Liaison Service (ref 459)

Apply by 23 September
Research Fellow, BIOLS (ref 107b)
Apply by 26 September
2 x Staff Developers, Staff Development Unit (p/t, ref 451)
Apply by 27 September
Health & Fitness Development Officer, Sports Service (ref 444)
Sports Development Officer, Sports Service (ref 445)
Apply by 30 September
Director, Estates & Facilities Management (ref 431)
Psychology Subject Group Secretary, COGS (ref 460)

For further details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/personnel/vacs or contact Staffing Services on ext. 8706, fax 877401, email recruitment@sussex.ac.uk.

Small ads
TO LET: 1-bed furnished flat in North Laine. £500 pcm excl. Available now. Contact Alexandra Lambe on 07876 281563.


TO LET: Furnished room in B’ton. Suit n/s PG. £75 pw. Email prpy0@sussex.ac.uk.

TO LET: Petrol strimmer. Unused, with all manuals and safety equipment. £60. Email d.booth@sussex.ac.uk.

TO LET: 4-bed B’ton house from Sep. 91/0-mth tenancy. £900 pcm. Suit finalists or PGs. Tel. 699006 or 678919 or email scfg3@sussex.ac.uk.

 Bulletin

The fortnightly Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field, Peter Simmons and Benedict Brook. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from staff and students of the University.

The next issue will be out on 20 September, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 13 September. Please contact the Press and Communications Office in Sussex House on ext. 8888 or email Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.