

Dance Movement Therapy: A Potential Treatment for Chronic Pain through the Fear Avoidance Model



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INTRODUCTION

- Fear-avoidance model explains how individuals with pain can develop worsening pain through vicious cycle of having maladaptive/hypervigilant attentional processes and anxiety-driven responses to pain (e.g., pain catastrophizing, fear, depression, anxiety)
- Prevents necessary physical activity engagement, therefore reinforcing pain and disability (1). Fear-avoidance model emphasizes improvement their baseline function and daily activity by reducing pain-related fear (2).
- In current literature, fear-avoidance model can predict post-operative outcomes (3,4).
- Currently, cognitive behavioral therapy and physical therapy are primarily employed to address fear-avoidance cycle within context of pain. However, CBT and PT only focus on specific concepts within fear avoidance model.
- Dance movement therapy (DMT) has potential to be form of treatment by addressing various issues emphasized in fear-avoidance model of pain.

THEORETICAL BENEFIT OF DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY

- DMT is psychotherapeutic use of dance and movement to address various physical and mental conditions including acute and chronic pain.
- Integrates non-verbal and verbal techniques, creative process, self-expression, and social support to optimize physical health and psychological well-being (5). DMT uses not only physical but also psychosocial cues to assess and treat individuals with pain disorders.
- Fear-avoidance model also incorporates these factors, and therefore, DMT potential to treat chronic pain by addressing many aspects of model (Figure 1).



THEORETICAL BENEFIT OF DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY

- Within model, emotional, behavioral, thought-provoking, and values or beliefs impacting subjective response to nociception and reaction to pain
- Experience of pain from injury leads individuals to catastrophize pain experiences, can be exacerbated by negative affect.
- Pain-related fear, avoid movement to prevent further pain experience. Disuse of muscle groups and avoidance of activity causes further debilitation, depression, and decreased quality of life.
- Dance movement therapy stops fear-avoidance cycle by modifying individuals' thought processes and behavioral responses while tapping into resilience.
- DMT changes all four aspects of fear-avoidance model: emotions, behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs.

Dance movement therapy is established in pain literature, and can be potential integrative therapy for pain disorders. However, further research should be conducted to understand its efficacy and effectiveness in acute and chronic pain treatment in the context of the fear-avoidance model. Future studies should also investigate the underlying mechanisms by which dance movement therapy treats pain disorders, especially by addressing the fear-avoidance model.

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