

# Painting from Within-Developing and Evaluating a Manual-based Art therapy for Patients with Depression

Akademisk avhandling

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av Christina Blomdahl

Fakultetsopponent:

Ingela Skärsäter, Professor i omvårdnad

Högskolan i Halmstad, Sverige

## Avhandlingen baseras på följande delarbeten

- I. Blomdahl C, Gunnarsson AB, Guregård S, Björklund A. A realist review of art therapy for clients with depression. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 2013; 40(3):322-30.
- II. Blomdahl C, Gunnarsson BA, Guregård S, Rusner M, Wijk H, Björklund A. Art therapy for patients with depression: expert opinions on its main aspects for clinical practice. *Journal of Mental Health* 2016; 25(6); 527-35.
- III. Blomdahl C, Guregård S, Rusner M, Wijk H. A Manual-based Phenomenological Art Therapy for patients diagnosed with moderate to severe depression (PATd) – a randomized controlled study (submitted).
- IV. Blomdahl C, Wijk H, Guregård S, Rusner M. Meeting oneself in inner dialogue: a manual-based phenomenological art therapy as experienced by patients with moderate to severe depression. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* (In press).

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# Painting from Within-Developing and Evaluating a Manual-based Art therapy for Patients with Depression

**Christina Blomdahl**

Institutionen för vårdvetenskap och hälsa, Sahlgrenska akademien, Göteborgs universitet, Sverige, 2017.

## Abstract

**Aim:** The overall aim; was to develop and evaluate a manual-based art-therapy programme for patients with depression, to clarify treatment effects and to describe participants' experiences of the treatment. Specific aims: (I) To explore and describe how art therapy works in relation to therapeutic factors, clinical application, and circumstances in the experimental situation, for patients with depression; (II) To explore what experts in the field of art therapy consider to be the main aspects of treatment for patients with depression in clinical practice; (III) To investigate the effects of manual-based Phenomenological Art Therapy in addition to treatment as usual (PATd/TAU) compared with only treatment as usual (TAU) for patients diagnosed with moderate to severe depression; and (IV) To describe and explore the significance of manual-based Phenomenological Art Therapy as experienced by patients diagnosed with moderate to severe depression. **Methods:** (I) Systematic literature review according to Realist review; (II) Expert survey according to the Delphi technique (Studies I and II were used as a foundation for developing the manual-based Phenomenological Art Therapy for patients with depression (PATd)); (III) A randomized controlled trial with intention-to-treat design; and, an interview study (IV) Phenomenological approach, according to Reflective Lifeworld Research. **Results:** (I) Eight therapeutic factors were identified: self-exploration, self-expression, communication, understanding and explanation, integration, symbolic thinking, creativity, and sensory stimulation. (II) Resulting in four main aspects of art therapy for patients with depression; expression through art-making and verbal communication concerning: depressive thoughts, feelings, life experiences, and physical symptoms. (III) PATd in addition to Treatment As Usual (TAU) showed a significant reduction of depression and an improved return to work compared to only TAU. Self-esteem significantly improved, and suicide ideation did not change. (IV) PATd facilitates meeting oneself in an inner dialogue between the evident and the unaware. The art-making and describing that experience makes oneself and the situation visible, opening up and altering understanding through the inner dialogue. **Conclusions:** Manual-based PATd seems to work as intended, being an effective treatment, and contributes to recovery for patients with moderate to severe depression.

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Major Depression, Programme Development, Art Therapy

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