

PAPER

Cognition, Dementia, and Intervention

M. HEEMSKERK, A. RANDHAWA. *Point of therapeutic care: Collaborative digital art network. Gerontechnology 2018;17(Suppl):70s; <https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.070.00>* **Purpose** Art therapy and recreational activity group work have been widely promoted as appropriate non-pharmacological interventions for older adults including those with dementia¹. While traditional materials such as paint, clay, and pencil continue to be dominant in the practice of art therapy, adoption of digital technology as an art medium and a therapeutic intervention tool for older adults remains an open area of research. Skepticism stems from doubts over its ability to stimulate senses the way conventional art therapy involving pottery, sculpturing, knitting and collage does. The comfort and convenience which digital technology provides must not be overlooked because of its potentially expressive and empowering influence on older adults who may be sensitive or averse to the use of physical medium for the fear of unfamiliarity, complexity, getting wet, soiled and so forth². As personal computing devices are affordable and powerful enough to support various forms of digital art, usability and accessibility issues associated with digital art tools on these platforms continue to improve especially for older adults, as well as therapists. The interest in exploring digital art for therapeutic purposes is evolving, resulting in the development of technology aimed at addressing and accommodating the needs and practices of art therapy³. **Method** We expand on the above work and present a collaborative network for digital art production implemented within a campus of care and evaluated for its efficacy as a therapeutic intervention tool. A campus of care creates unique opportunities for art therapy to have the ability to move along with a person as they go through various stages of aging and living. This does not necessitate abandoning current art projects, finding new therapist and forming new teams. The network is therefore tasked to keep associations and interactions among group members alive even as the older adults transition through various levels of care within the campus from independent living, to assisted care, and, eventually, to complex/residential care. **Results & Discussion** Intervention progress in terms of type, number, and duration of sessions is reported not only during therapist assisted sessions but also when the older adult is working alone or with other members of the group such as volunteers, friends, and family including grandchildren who may be collaborating, connected remotely, leveraging touch based drawing/painting, gesture recognition, orientation/motion sensing, facial expression detection, speech processing and audio/video conferencing components of the collaborative art network.

References

1. Chancellor B, Duncan A, Chatterjee A. Art therapy for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. IOS Press. 2014;39:1-11
2. Orr P. Technology use in art therapy practice: 2004 and 2011 comparison. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. Elsevier. 2012 Sep;39:234-238
3. Yorozu Y, Hirano M, Oka K, Tagawa Y. Towards the development of a technology for art therapy and dementia: definition of needs and design constraints. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. Elsevier. 2010 Sep;34:293-300

Keywords: art therapy, recreation, intervention

Address: Director of Community Life. Elim Village, Surrey, BC V4N5T6 Canada;

E: mheemskerk@elimvillage.com

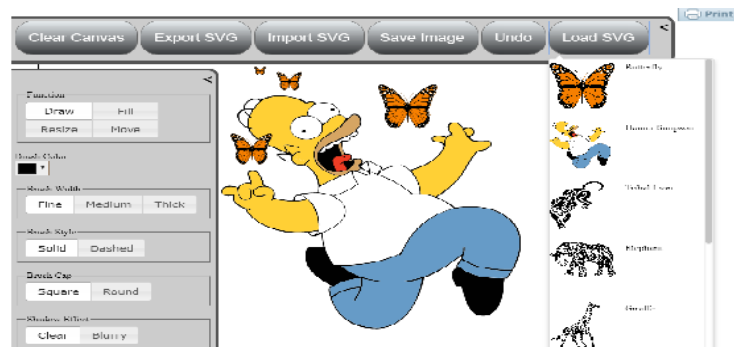


Figure 1. User Interface for Collaborative Artwork