

# Effectiveness of Dance to Improve Mood in Older Adults With Dementia: A Review of Evidence

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## BACKGROUND/SIGNIFICANCE

- Dementia is the most common neurodegenerative disease affecting 50 million people worldwide (World Health Organization, 2019)
- Neuropsychiatric symptoms such as agitation affect 50-75% of persons living with dementia (Harris-Kojetin et al., 2016)
- Dance is one type of non-pharmacological approach that offers psychological and physical benefits
- Dance therapy combines cognitive, physical, and social training that is thought to be effective for persons with dementia (Bennett & Hackney, 2018; Van der Steen et al., 2018)

## PURPOSE

To synthesize evidence about dance therapy impacts on mood and agitation among persons living with dementia.

## METHODS

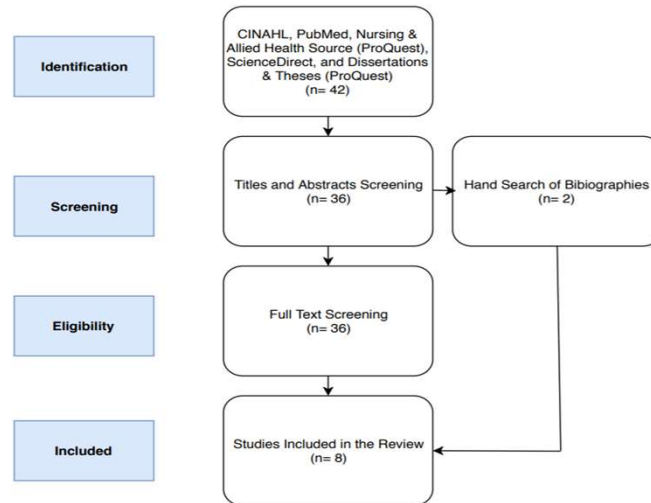
The Mixed Methods Appraisal tool (Hong et al., 2018) was used to assess the quality of relevant articles. 8 articles were used for the review.

The framework established by Whitemore and Knaffl (2005) was the guide used for the review. The framework includes a systematic approach for problem identification, literature searching, data synthesis through an unbiased critiquing too, as well as the presentation of the data.

An expert health sciences librarian guided the search strategy.

Studies included were required to have dance therapy, adapted dance, dance exercise, modified dance, or recreational dance as the primary intervention.

Excluded articles included non-English language, dissertations, and theses.



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## RESULTS

Majority of the studies found dance therapy improved anxiety (Douka, Zilidou, Lilou & Tsolaki, 2019; Adam, Ramli, & Shahar, 2016), depression (Adam, Ramli, & Shahar, 2016), neuropsychiatric symptoms (Douka, Zilidou, Lilou & Tsolaki, 2019; Lazarou et al., 2017), and mood (Guzman, Freeston, Rochester, Hughes, & James, 2016).

Majority of studies were carried out in Europe.

Two studies excluded persons taking antipsychotic and anticholinergic medications (Lazarou et al., 2017; Adam, Ramli, & Shahar, 2016).

Only 2 studies assessed impacts of dance on agitation. A case study reported improvement in agitation for one participant following 12 weeks of dance therapy (Guzman et al., 2016)

In a very small pilot study (n=6), there was some reduction in agitation for 4 participants as their scores on the Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory decreased an average of 6.14 points following 4 weeks of dance (Duignan, Hedley, & Milverto, 2009).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- The studies reviewed did not reveal any safety concerns or adverse events.
- To consider dance therapy in a facility setting, the therapists and staff should be included in designing and executing implementation.
- Dance therapy may not only benefit persons with dementia but also their caregivers.
- A challenge for clinicians and administrators could be the costs associated with a dance therapy program.
- If experienced dance instructor is not affordable, non-choreographed or improvisational dance may be an option.

## CONCLUSION

Findings suggest that dance therapy does improve mood and agitation among persons living with dementia. However, based on our evaluation, the evidence is weak and further research is needed.

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