

A Visual Investigation: Artwork by children and adolescents who receive chronic transfusion therapy for sickle cell anemia or thalassemia

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Abstract

Sickle cell anemia and thalassemia are chronic, life-threatening illnesses. As such, they are unquestionably distressing, and have the potential to significantly affect psychological functioning. This thesis is a visual investigation of the artwork produced by adolescents and children, receiving chronic blood transfusions as treatment for either sickle cell anemia or thalassemia. The primary purpose of this visual investigation is to provide additional insight into the impact of these illnesses as demonstrated through artwork.

Seven children and adolescents (4 with sickle cell anemia and 3 with thalassemia) participated in the study. Participation included completing five art therapy assessments, an Introduction Image, a Bridge Assessment, a Self-Portrait, a Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD), and an image of illness, and filling out three psychological questionnaires, Spielberger Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAIC), Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI), and Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Scale (CNSIE). The resulting artwork was assessed on an individual basis using published art therapy literature to formulate individual case studies. The case studies examined the possible reasons a subject may have drawn a specific image in relation to the psychosocial impact of his or her illness. Following the case studies, the drawings are presented by assessment, in order to observe any overall trends between images drawn, type of illness and score on the psychological questionnaires.