

Coloring Your "Art" Out: Outcomes of Offering Coloring Materials in Targeted Hospital Staff Areas

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Objective

Healthcare staff burnout is a widespread national issue that has been reported extensively and the need for stress relief activities is apparent. Coloring books for adults have grown in popularity due to the promise of such benefits as relaxation. A pilot program was started to determine if placing coloring materials in the library could help reduce stress or anxiety.



Figure 1: Display sign announcing pilot program.

Methods

The librarian and Humanities in Medicine program director at an academic medical organization devised a plan to offer color-in sheets and colored pencils to healthcare staff. The coloring materials were located in a hospital library. Although participants were not obligated to do so, a short, online survey focusing on anxiety (6-item Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) was available for participants to complete after they finished using the coloring supplies. Those who completed the survey were eligible to win a \$25 Apple gift card. While coloring therapy does not incorporate all elements of art or relaxation therapy, it may help promote a state of engagement brought about through artistic expression and thus may help to decrease people's experiences of anxiety.

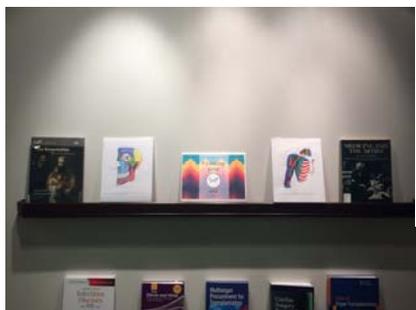
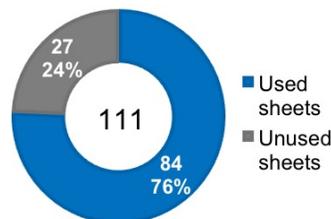


Figure 2: Display by the front door of library.

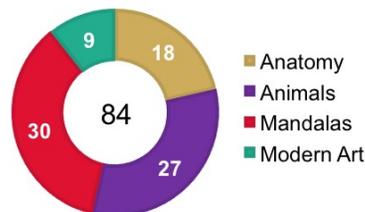


Figure 3: Coloring sheets and sign with instructions on how to take the online survey.

Popularity of coloring in the library
August 5, 2016 until February 5, 2017



Number of used coloring sheets based on category
August 5, 2016 until February 5, 2017



Results

There were four different categories of the color-in sheets: Anatomy, Animals, Mandalas and Modern Art. Out of the 111 coloring sheets available, 84 were taken or colored during a period of six months. Even with the incentive of winning a gift card, none of the participants filled out the short survey. Therefore, there is no data of the user population or feedback on levels of anxiety before or after the coloring exercise.

Conclusions

Future considerations include adding a paper version of the survey for the participants to complete and offering this program in other areas. While a library can serve as a location for relaxation purposes, it is important to consider other high-traffic areas in a hospital, such as break rooms or lunchrooms as well. It is also important to consider additional hospital staff, such as art or humanities coordinators, whom librarians can collaborate with to reduce anxiety and burnout in healthcare staff.



Figure 4: Example of colored sheet. Credit to Oregon Health & Science University. Historical Collections and Archives.

