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D.S. DYUSENBAEVA¹, I.R. KHUSSAINOVA¹
¹Kazakh Institute of Oncology and Radiology, Almaty, the Republic of Kazakhstan

The use of art therapy for the psychological support of women with gynecological cancer diseases in different emotional states

Abstract. *The article provides general psychological characteristics of emotional states of women with gynecological cancer diseases which are manifested mainly in the difficulties of emotional and rational perception and response to traumatic situations associated with the serious illness. The use of modern treatment programs allows achieving significant success in the treatment of malignant neoplasms in patients. However, repeated hospitalizations, long-term outpatient treatment to a large extent isolate the patients from the society. The psychological status of cancer patients is characterized by numerous fears, first of all, the fear of death, a high level of anxiety, guilt, often increased aggression, elements of post-traumatic syndrome. All of the above circumstances lead to a serious social maladjustment of the person. The use of various art therapy techniques contributes to the self-expression of cancer patients, helps them adapt in the society, develop their creative potential.*

Art therapy as a part of psychological support provided in the framework of the rehabilitation process helps finding inner strengths and the path to recovery in such a difficult life situation.

Keywords: *oncopsychology, psychological support, art therapy, clinical system art therapy.*

Relevance. In recent years, clinical institutions of different countries increase the application of such innovative approach such art psychotherapy. The international classification [1] includes four modalities of art psychotherapy: art therapy (psychotherapy by means of fine art), dramotherapy (psychotherapy by means of stage play), dance movement therapy (psychotherapy by means of movement and dance), and music therapy (psychotherapy by means of sounds and music).

Our country is also increasing the spectrum of forms and areas of using art therapy for therapeutic, preventive, and rehab purposes. The new emerging approaches to art therapy are supported by the development of the biopsychosocial paradigm of modern medicine, the changing social and cultural conditions. The social and clinical directions of modern art therapy are now under development.

Art therapy is viewed as a range of methods of psychological or psychophysical impact through the depictive activity of patients with different psychic and somatic pathologies. These methods are used for therapeutic, preventive, and rehab purposes [2]. At that, art therapy is still often perceived as a set of mainly empirical methods, an "alternative method of treatment" [3].

In other countries, research in the field of art therapy looks mostly like a description of individual cases or a series of cases. Quantitative evidence-based comparison of therapeutic efficacy of different variants of individual and group art therapy in psycho-correction and rehabilitation of patients with various psychosomatic diseases is of great relevance at the moment.

The concept of socio-medical assistance is changing dramatically these days. It is now more focused on supporting the inner vital potential of people than on treating their diseases or solving their problems. This purpose is also achieved by more active use of various available external resources associated with nature, the culture, the communication, and creative activity (strength-based intervention models). Art therapy uses these resources to

restore and preserve health, harmonize the relations and support the human creative nature [4].

Target groups for modern clinical and social art therapy include:

- people with mental and physical health problems;
- people who have suffered mental trauma associated with organized or domestic violence, natural anomalies or man-made disasters;
- elderly people with psychosocial problems and diseases characteristic of their age;
- those who are experiencing an identity crisis;
- children, adolescents, young people, as well as adults in abnormal psychosocial conditions;
- persons with various addictions and codependences;
- dysfunctional and incomplete families and communities;
- stigmatized individuals and groups.

Clinical and social art therapies require different specialization. At that, the status and level of professional recognition of art therapy is very important. The practitioners understand that the number of methods is equal to the number of specialists because each of them contributes his own experience to the technique and interpretation. And although medicine is still not sure about the practical use of the proposed methods, an increasing number of hospitals and medical centers are introducing additional treatment programs which include the elements of visualization and expressive arts.

Our country is now developing a system of additional professional education in art therapy for specialists with a different background – psychologists, doctors (psychiatrists, psychotherapists), teachers, and etc. [5].

The development of clinical direction of art-therapy strengthens its connection with practical, scientific medicine. It is a significant factor for further improvement of art therapy.

The clinical systemic art therapy (SAT) is an example of art therapy integration into the clinical setting while preserving its specificity [6-7] (Figure 1).

Clinical SAT ensures:

- optimal consideration of various biopsychosocial factors of preserving and restoring health;
- substantiation of the general strategy of art-therapeutic interventions and specialist functions at different stages of the art-therapeutic process in their correlation with other methods of treatment and rehabilitation;

- a possibility of including art therapy in the organizational context of medicine, an optimal interaction of specialists conducting art therapy with other specialists of the multiprofessional team;
- consideration of social, cultural, institutional and other external influences on the process of art therapy, social and cultural experience of patients.

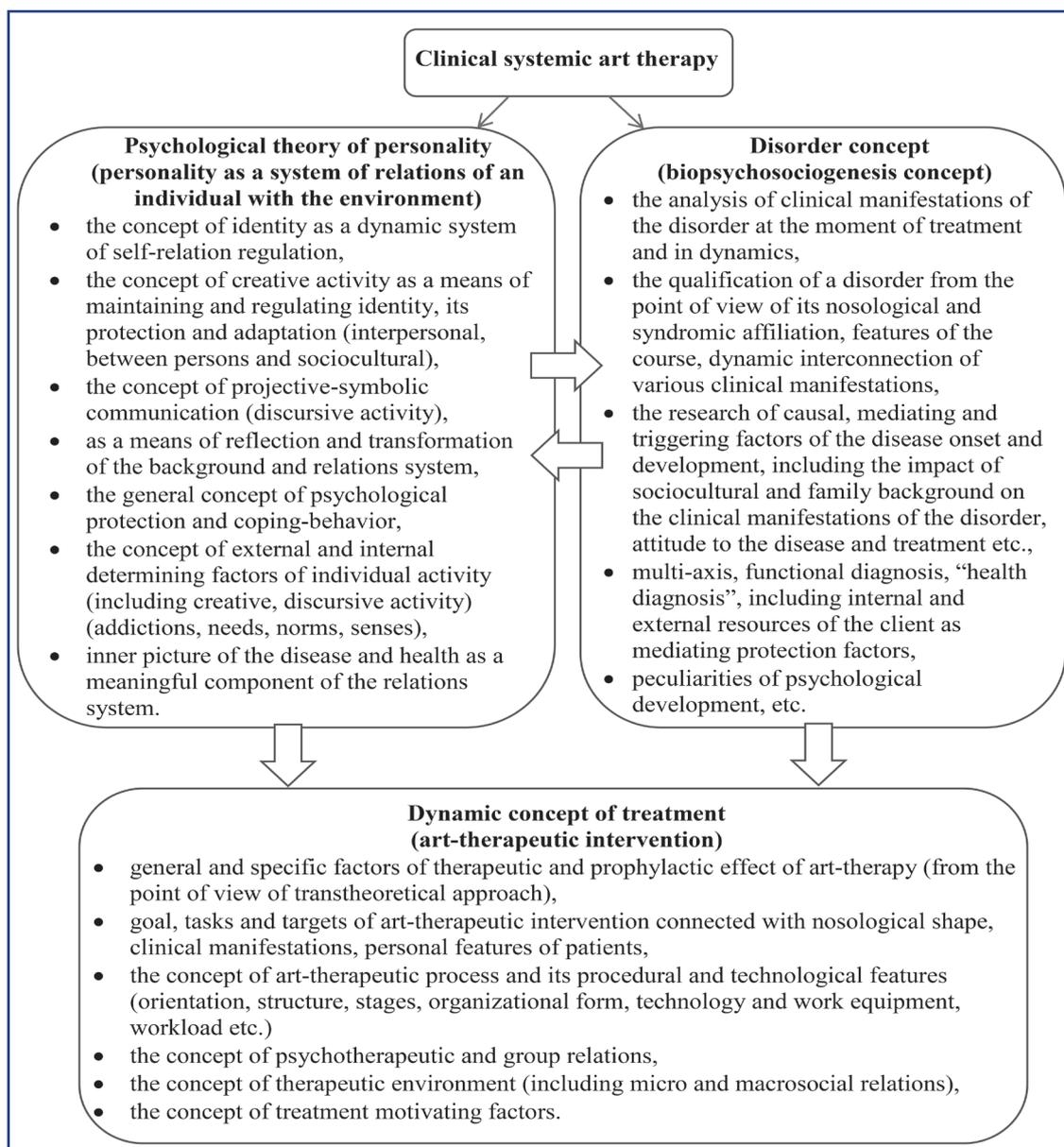


Figure 1 – Main components of theory and methodology of clinical SAT

In oncopsychology, art therapy is complementary tool that facilitates the activation of internal creative reserves and capacities of the patient and is directly related to the improvement of the patient's psycho-emotional status and the state of mind. Art therapy is a psychological and spiritual therapy for the patient; it is a totally natural method of healing and development of human soul through artistic expression.

The use of art therapy for cancer patients provides certain results when they visualize healing images and represent them by means of visual arts (Figures 2, 3).

Art therapy is not a treatment tool or method but it facilitates the disclosure of inner capacity and skills of a person, the development of a human ability to create (creativ-

ity), the harmonization and development of personality. Art therapy helps the person to acquire his own strength and integrity in order to solve problems in a difficult life situation like a cancer disease.

Drawing has become the most popular art therapy tool in oncology. Today, there are many different ways and techniques of working with a picture.

Methods of individual work with the picture:

- “mood”,
- “self portrait”,
- “tree of life”,
- associative and free drawing,
- “I-image” (Figure 4).



Figure 2 – Group art-therapy with cancer patients



Figure 3 – Sublimation of emotions through art therapy

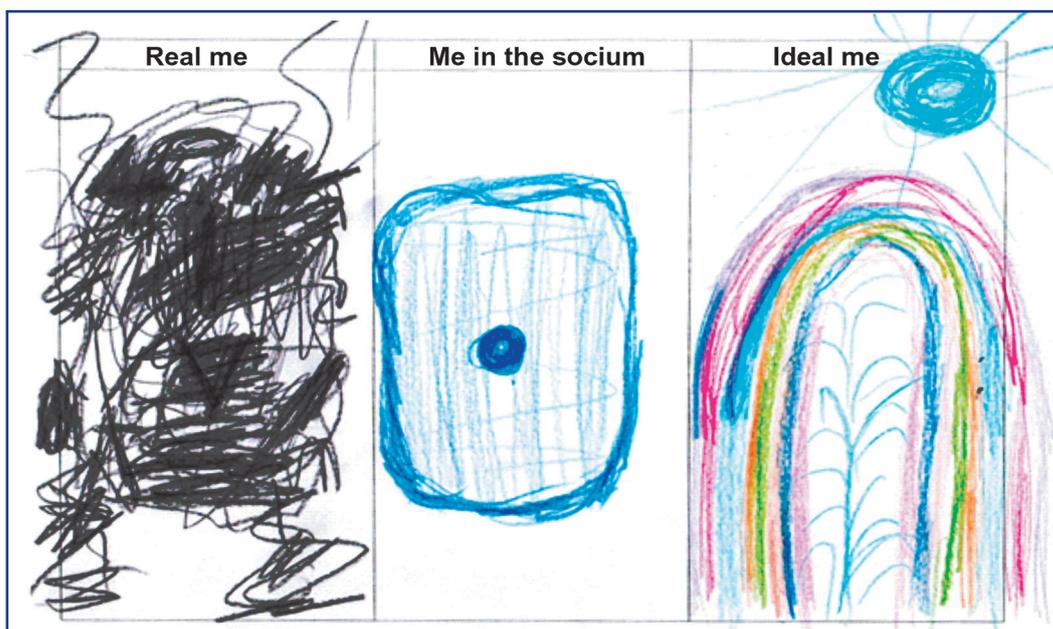


Figure 4 – Art-therapeutic technique with “I-image”

Group art therapy allows to:

- create a situation of mutual support;
- help overcome a sense of social exclusion and stigmatization;
- to conduct group interaction in the presence of a psychotherapist, which contributes to the formation of the experience of healthy relationships in the society;
- support the development of social and communication skills;
- assist in the development of new roles that can reveal the hidden qualities of the individual through changing relationships with other members of the group.

Group methods of working with pictures:

- "gifts",
- "group portrait",
- "triptych",
- "dialogue",
- "me, you, we",
- group drawing
- drawing in a circle, etc.

Art therapy has no limitations and contraindications when used in oncology. This method is always related to resources and can be used in almost any location, at any age and in any directions. The mental condition and the general physiological condition of the patient can be the only obstacle and limitation for the use of a wide arsenal of tools and methods of art therapy in oncology since this method requires a free field of perception and a certain amount of free mental energy.

Thus, art therapy has become very relevant in the process of psychological support of cancer patients in various emotional states. It has predetermined the interest for the further use of art-therapeutic techniques.

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