The Arts in Hospital programme was created in 1990 as an initiative of the World Decade for Cultural Development of the UN and Unesco, spreading to 18 member states altogether. The aim of the initiative was to increase the cosiness of care institutions through the use of art and to integrate art and cultural activities as part of the treatment, rehabilitation and working methods in social and health care.

In my research, I study the scope and forms in which the Arts in Hospital initiative is reflected in the everyday life of care institutions in Eastern Finland. Interviews, observations and diaries conducted and written in four social and health care units are convincing proof that art and cultural activities are a part of everyday life, albeit randomly and usually run by amateur artists. The methodology employed in the empirical part was ethnography and qualitative methods.

The extensive literature survey and research material describes and analyses the opportunities to apply art and cultural activities in social and health care services. I found four elements in the art and cultural activities that have an impact on a person’s wellbeing. Firstly, art provides artistic sensation and meaningful aesthetic experiences. Secondly, people in contact with art usually express a better self-rated health and feel they are leading a more satisfactory life. Thirdly, artistic activities create communality and networks, giving one better control over one’s life. And fourthly, art makes living and working surroundings more enjoyable and attractive.

In my study, I applied the triangulation of theories, materials and methods. The framework theory is Richard Shusterman’s philosophy of pragmatist aesthetics, which emphasises the element of experiences provided by art and its active and practical role in life. The field of art and culture can meet with the field of social and health care, if art and culture are seen as part of everyone’s life, needs and rights. In care units, this entails additional training for the staff, re-assessment of resources and more flexible organisation of work. The integration of art and cultural activities in the Finnish social and health care services has not materialised. There are examples of individual projects, but they are limited in time and scope.

Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords
sociology of art
cultural services - care units
community care - culture
cultural activities - care environment

Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information