

**POETRY AS A NATURAL HEALING PRACTICE**  
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**Abstract:** *in this article it is discussed that poetry can be used to help people get access to the wisdom they already have but cannot experience because they cannot find the words in ordinary language. Though poetry as therapy is a relatively new development in the expressive arts, it is as old as the first chants sung around the tribal fires of primitive peoples. The chant/ song/poem is what heals the heart and soul. Even the word psychology suggests that, psyche meaning soul and logos speech or word.*

**Keywords:** *poetry therapy, poetry and healing, voice and healing, poetry and medicine, sense, mythology, taboo.*

**ПОЭЗИЯ КАК ПРИРОДНАЯ ЦЕЛИТЕЛЬНАЯ ПРАКТИКА**  
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**Аннотация:** *в данной статье обсуждается, что поэзия может быть использована для помощи людям получить доступ к мудрости, которую они уже имеют, но не могут испытать, потому что они не могут найти слова в обычном языке. Хотя поэзия как терапия является относительно новым развитием в выразительном искусстве. Поэзия так же стара, как первые песнопения, исполняемые вокруг племенных огней первобытных народов. Пение, песня, стихотворение - это то, что исцеляет сердце и душу. Даже слово «психология» предполагает, что психика означает речь и слово «душа» и «логос».*

**Ключевые слова:** *поэтическая терапия, поэзия и исцеление, голос и исцеление, поэзия и медицина, смысл, мифология, табу.*

Many people have an intuitive sense that voice in general and poetry in particular can be healing. We have all experienced the comfort of soothing words. Finding the words to articulate a traumatic experience can bring relief. A letter between friends who are fighting can heal a relational wound. People are frequently moved to write a poem in times of extremity. In mainstream culture there are subjects that are not talked about. They are taboo. For example, each of us is going to die, but we do not talk about dying. We are all in the dialogue of illness, death and dying, whether or not we are talking about it. Poetry gives us ways to talk about it. In mythology Oceanus told Prometheus, “Words are the physician of the mind diseased” [2, 48].

Though it was recorded there was a Roman physician named Soranus in the first century A.D. who prescribed poetry and drama for his patients, the link between poetry and medicine has not been well documented. It is interesting however, that the first hospital in the American colonies to care for the mentally ill, Pennsylvania Hospital founded in 1751 by Benjamin Franklin, employed several ancillary treatments for their patients including reading, writing and the publishing of their writings in a newspaper they titled The Illuminator.

The term “bibliotherapy” is a more common term than poetry therapy, which became popular in the 1960’s and 1970’s, which literally means the use of literature to serve or help. Freud once wrote, “Not I, but the poet discovered the unconscious.” Later on, many other theoreticians such as Adler, Jung, Arieti and Reik wrote of how much science had to gain from the study of poets [1, 65].

It is becoming more and more common for people dealing with serious illnesses to write and publish their stories and poems as their own healing practice. Many physicians and other health care providers have joined in writing their own personal experiences with illness, death and dying.

The poem “I Can’t” by Carlene Shaff represents a turning point in her treatment, facilitated by using poetry therapy, and documented in her poem “I Can’t.”

I Can’t

*I can't. I just can't. I can't do it all.*

*I can't be all things to all people*

*At all times and under all circumstances.*

*I can't be the one to always change my plans to suit another's.*

Healing is frequently thought of as taking place at the level of the individual. But if healing is viewed as a process that brings us back to wholeness, then in addition to happening within the individual patient, healing can also take place between patient and family members, between patient and the larger community of which they are a part, and even at the level of the community as a whole. In fact healing is often necessary on many of these levels simultaneously [4, 58].

Overall, the research on poetry therapy in general and expressive writing in particular is promising. Recognizing the need for additional research, the National Association for Poetry Therapy (NAPT) and Lapidus (the Association for the Literary Art in Personal Development) located in London are planning a multi-center research study on the efficacy of Poetry Therapy with cancer patients. Also, NAPT is embarking on a multi-center clinical research study attempting to assess the efficacy of Poetry.

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