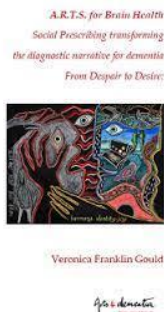


How digital access enables social prescribing to health-giving A.R.T.S.

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The UK **Creative Health** movement reaches out from our **National Health Service** to the **arts** and voluntary sector, **linked** by **social prescribing** – demonstrating the power of **collaboration** to **prevent ill health** and **enhance wellbeing**. **Digital access** has an ever increasing **vital** role to play, which as founder of Arts 4 Dementia, I shall present for the purpose of **linking the person** to cultural and wellbeing stimulation to protect against the advance of **cognitive decline**.



Each year there are nearly **ten million new cases of dementia worldwide – 400,000 in Italy**. One-third more will not receive a diagnosis, either due to personal or cultural fears. All would derive cognitive benefits and enhanced wellbeing by participating in health-giving arts activity. By A.R.T.S. I mean wide-ranging Activities – visual arts, dance, drama, music, heritage, nature,

sports etc - to **Revitalise The Soul**), accessed and sustained through social prescription.

I shall discuss

- the **health benefits** of A.R.T.S. as psychosocial interventions to modify risk factors for dementia,
- **Digital** A.R.T.S. development and access,
- **In-person** A.R.T.S. and how to **locate them digitally**,

- **A.R.T.S. on Prescription Consortia**, the Creative Health **Quality Framework** and
- Arts, Health and Wellbeing **digital networks** and finally
- the **SP route** from patient to A.R.T.S.

Health-giving benefits of A.R.T.S. as psychosocial interventions

As one-third of dementia cases could be prevented, engaging in A.R.T.S. can significantly modify risk factors, such as social isolation, physical inactivity and obesity, depression and lack of learning, and improve health and wellbeing. The World Health Organisation Guidelines 2019 explain that modifying these risk factors reduces neuropathological damage, increasing and/or maintaining cognitive reserve – (building the brain’s resilience against decline).

As **creative health** practice from mid-life through to dementia diagnosis and beyond, A.R.T.S. are offered as psychosocial interventions, by cultural and wellbeing organisations, highlighted by the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing *Creative Health report 2017* and nurtured by our National Centre for Creative Health.

[Modifying risk factors]

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.. *Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community*, ‘Participation’ is the key to overcoming social and health challenges - and participating in the ‘Cultural life of the community’ opens the door to new discoveries, uplifting experiences and co-creativity – the essence of cognitively stimulating A.R.T.S.

Social contact to counteract loneliness and isolation - A.R.T.S. empower people of all social backgrounds and cultural ethnicities to bond together, nurture personal identity and fulfil core psychological needs in mutual creative endeavour.

Learning music, dance, poetry or drama, performing, writing, exploring/discussing works of art, the artist's intention, challenges the brain to create new neural connections and pathways to compensate for reduced activity in other regions.

(Dance movement vs physical inactivity, obesity and depression.) Dance offers a joyous route to health and wellbeing, more effective than an exercise class in reducing body fat, fall prevention and, through the role of music, in improving mood, reducing stress and helping to maintain attention. Improvisation offers the opportunity for self-expression, for feelings to emanate through the whole body. Dance is the most physically expressive art form, integrating several brain functions at once – kinaesthetic, rational, musical and emotional. Increasing neural activity and hippocampal volume, it offers powerful protection against the risk of dementia and generates cognitive reserve.

Music vs depression Music-making, especially interacting with other musicians or singers - whether classical, jazz, rock or folk - provides a tool for a total brain workout, improves plasticity in the cortex, which enhances the ageing brain's cognitive abilities – perception, motor function, working memory – improves cardiovascular strength, allows creative self-expression, reducing stress and giving a joyful sense of accomplishment.

(Connecting actively with nature) Group activities in nature help protect against obesity, sleep deprivation, anxiety, depression and social isolation.

So these are key health-giving benefits of A.R.T.S. – to preserve brain health and wellbeing in the community. (WHO, 2019, *What is the evidence on the role of arts? Health evidence Synthesis Report 67*)

Digital solutions

Since COVID, many cultural organisations have continued to offer online interactive A.R.T.S.. Nature-based organisations have introduced innovative **Augmented Reality** programmes for those unable to attend events in person. And **Virtual Reality** headsets open up health-giving in-person activity for brain health,

(Digital Access) But first, mindful of health equity in an increasingly digital world, we need to think about digital access for those unable to afford, or inexperienced with the technology – for individuals and carers.

Our National Digital Inclusion Network, powered by the Good Things Foundation, partners with libraries to provide digital access and support - loan schemes for iPads, tablets or mobile phones, with free online digital start-up training. Through the NHS Digital Pathfinder programme, Leeds Library Service promotes 100% digital inclusion for people with dementia, with carers trained to become Digital Champions and encouraged to bring iPads to sessions. Age UK's Digital Champion Programme also loans technology for older people without access and digital skill support, through trained volunteers. Action for Elders offers one-to-one support to help people get online and stay connected.

Online A.R.T.S.

Live, weekly interactive A.R.T.S. – even on Zoom – offer the best health-giving stimulation to preserve cultural interests, with engaging opportunities to co-curate. Highly creative, re-energising online A.R.T.S. workshops, accessible through the organisation website, inspire people who cannot leave home, to dance across the screen, create scenarios to perform together, compose music and poetry, discuss and create arts, explore virtual guided tours of museums, heritage houses and gardens.

(Augmented Reality (AR) in Nature) **Augmented reality**, an enhanced, interactive version of a real-world environment is especially effective in Nature, with holographic content spanning multiple sensory modalities – visual, auditory, haptic, somatosensory and olfactory.

The Eden Project offers Eden Universe two innovative Augmented Reality experiences in their Rainforest Biome, using 5G technologies to enhance in-person visitor experience, increase online engagement, helping to connect people to each other and the living world. Developed in collaboration with experiential art collective Marshmallow Laser Feast, these enable viewers to explore perspectives beyond our human senses.

'Living Lens' uses environment-responsive AR to represent plants through the senses of different animals; and 'Weather Maker' visualises the inner workings of a tree as an AR layer over a 360° camera travels up and down its trunk.

'The Invisible Rainforest' reveals hidden connections between life and the environment, inviting the viewer to reflect on personal interaction with the natural world.

Augmented reality (AR) garden

The prize-winning Rare Space Garden at Exbury Gardens in Hampshire teamed up with Meta and immersive reality agency Arcade to create an augmented reality Rare Space Garden Experience, which allows people to interact and 'build' their own virtual garden, take selfies in them, using their Facebook or Instagram app on their smartphone.

Virtual Reality (VR) interventions – through the use of VR headsets - can improve cognitive and motor function in older adults with MCI or dementia - especially in attention, execution, memory, global cognition, and balance. The VR content - immersive, interactive videos or applications - combines physical and cognitive training, with wondrous A.R.T.S.. experiences. The trainer uploads content to the headsets, and helps guide individuals, ideally in a social group or with their care partner. Wearing the headset, you marvel at the virtual environment, and are irresistibly drawn to move and respond



VR headsets – like the Meta Oculus Quest 2, seen here are operated with two controllers. There is no need to be online to use them! They can be loaned through Alzheimer Scotland and the Alzheimer Society UK is exploring the use of VR headsets for stimulating interactive A.R.T.S. experiences. person’s home, or in social groups in healthy living centres and care settings. ([The Ageing Revolution](#)).

The immersive, interactive content encourages the user to participate in invigorating exercise, to sing and dance, explore history, art, literature, walk through heritage and the natural world, walk while reciting poems, name flowers and animals while crossing obstacles, relive musical memories, sing and dance, create art, With YouTube VR videos, you can dance to your favourite musicians, go on VR heritage and environmental tours, virtual paths off the beaten track, such as The Eden Project’s OceanRift, VR Spacewalk Experience. MultiBrush, a tool for creative expression, 3D drawing, can engage more than one user creating art together.

Finally, Live-streaming High-calibre compelling performances - music, dance, drama - are live-streamed regularly through websites and into cinemas.

In-person A.R.T.S. to preserve brain health & how to locate them digitally

The first visual image of the A.R.T.S. venue sets the tone to entice the participant, whether online or in person. Artistic strength, natural or historic beauty, architectural design stimulates instant uplift, whether walking into a museum hung with masterpieces or modern gallery with vibrant thought-provoking artworks, or a dance or drama studio, a rehearsal room, or a church filled with decorative arts and enhanced acoustics, or the exquisite natural wonders of nature. These lift our hearts and minds from the outset.

Training Early-stage dementia awareness training for A.R.T.S. facilitators clarifies understanding of not only the challenges participants experience as the various dementias set in, but importantly, their existing skills and how best to access them.

Locating A.R.T.S. Weekly social A.R.T.S. programmes for person and care partner or companion are signposted as 'Learning' or 'Community' programmes on individual **A.R.T.S. organisations'** websites. Age UK signposts local A.R.T.S. including the popular Men's Sheds.

Creative Ageing Festivals, with online networks signpost a range of A.R.T.S. types – dance, drama, orchestral music, visual arts, heritage, horticulture etc. The Luminate website, effectively an ongoing festival, signposts projects throughout Scotland and runs a Dementia Inclusive Singing Network, searchable by postcode and area.

May is a popular month for national creative ageing festivals. Age UK Oxfordshire's Age of Creativity website signposts A.R.T.S. in person and online throughout England as does AgeCymru's Gwanwyn Festival for Wales, and the Dublin-based Bealtaine festival throughout Ireland.

- Prescribe-arts website directory signposts arts in health programmes, by health condition, activity type, location and day of the week.
- Arts 4 Dementia website directory signposts A.R.T.S. for brain health opportunities in the community nationwide, by postcode, art form and dementia/wellbeing need and day of the week.
- The Music Can website directory signposts to music organisations for dementia both in care and community.

A.R.T.S. on Prescription Consortia, Creative Health Quality Framework and cross sectoral digital networks

As SP raises personal awareness of A.R.T.S. , the most sustainable A.R.T.S. prescription programmes are cross-sector collaborations – headed by the A.R.T.S. organisations and with the local Primary Care Network LW team as referrer. Consortium partners

can also include ethnic groups, local authorities, and universities for arts and health student interaction, with digital support embedded into programmes.

For best practice, the UK Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance has established an online [Creative Health Quality Framework](#), providing downloadable PDF resources, with guidance on each of eight Creative Health Quality Principles. The Alliance website signposts to [Regional Champions](#) who, like their regional arts and health networks, raise awareness of A.R.T.S. opportunities to local networks and to LW seeking A.R.T.S. for their clients.

Social prescription route to A.R.T.S. activity

The SP route to A.R.T.S. generally starts in the surgery, where – whatever the patient need, in our case early symptoms of a dementia – GPs can refer patients to their Primary Care Network social prescribing link worker for non-clinical, psychosocial sources of support in the community, ie A.R.T.S.. As dementia diagnosis can take years – years during which the individual, and indeed family partner will be experiencing worsening symptoms of strain, confusion, stigma, fear and loneliness, encouragement to join social A.R.T.S. helps override the strain and maintain connectivity, sense of identity, of belonging in the community.

The GP as referrer

So, when a patient presents symptoms of a potential or actual dementia in the surgery, the GP can at any time during the peri-diagnostic process, refer the individual and/or care partner to their link worker for potential A.R.T.S. support. If the GP does so at the onset of symptoms, or at the point of referral to memory assessment, this encourages the patient to choose their favourite A.R.T.S. route to preserve their brain health

The GP enters the link worker referral into the patient's data on the Clinical IT system (EMIS Web or System1) into which a SP software platform - ie [Access Elemental](#) –

CONTACT	CONVERSATION	INTERVENTIONS	FOLLOW-UP	OUTCOMES
Referral to link worker	Link Worker record	Link Worker record	Link Worker record	Message back to referrer & GP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person demographics GP details Referral details (to/from) Presenting needs Risks & Safeguarding <p>Plus supporting information via referral or via shared care record</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About me Individual requirements Care & support plan Relevant problems Social context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings details Care & support plan incl: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs Strengths Goals Actions and activities Updates to person details Meetings summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referrals Signposting Attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings details Progress notes Outcome assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consent to share Summary Actual Needs Actions & activities Assessments Updated person details Plan and requested actions for GP/ professionals & person

connects. Through this system, both the GP and SPLW keep track of the patient's SP activity.

The ensuing Conversation with the link worker and patient clarifies what

matters most to the patient, their strengths, weaknesses and ideals. The link worker, having access to online cross-sector networks, flags up weekly A.R.T.S. that can best support the patient's health and wellbeing.

So, through the Access Elemental platform, to which the GP also has access, the link worker records and tracks every step of their SP journey – as in the Social Prescribing Information Standard (left).

- Contact
- Conversation
- A.R.T.S. intervention, SP Information Standard.
ISN Released 16 January where patient attended the A.R.T.S.;
- link worker Follow-up
- Outcome - ONS4 Wellbeing tool measures the impact of the A.R.T.S. on the patient's health and wellbeing. Link worker reports the outcome of the intervention and action plan to GP.

The A.R.T.S. providers too will, with users' consent, evaluate, report and build on the mutual learning of A.R.T.S. interventions to preserve brain health.

Patients and A.R.T.S. facilitators happily share experiences on social media.

Outstanding examples of A.R.T.S. blogs by people affected by dementia are shared

by Kate Swaffer of Australia, by Wendy Mitchell of Yorkshire and Gail Gregory of Lancashire, for whom dementia opened up Creativity as never before.

Grazie !