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## Art therapy: The healing powers within the Parkinson's brain

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This paper tries to delineate novel thinking in the field of neuroscience that points to the fact that the brain is not just a static organ as once believed; but actually a thriving moldable, pliable neuroplastic pudgy that given the right circumstances can re-learn old behavior and even learn new skills. This thinking is exemplified by as new scientific breakthrough in the field of neuroscience. The cerebellum was discovered to have a role in higher cortical function regulating thought and movement said Dr. Schmammann, Professor of Neurology at Harvard medical School and Director of the Mass General Hospital Ataxia Unit and the Laboratory for Neuroanatomy and Cerebellar Neurobiology. Previously by “*de novo* artistic expression” in people with severe head injuries which has been also reported in Parkinson's patients which appears to be enhanced by dopamine replacement. Therefore it would not be inconceivable that these same patients when exposed to various forms of art therapy including painting, sculpting and the like, as well as artistic vocal expression singing in a choir for instance can also bring forth new motor functions or redevelopment of old functions. As Parkinson's patients are turning more and more to these types of therapies for the soothing, calming effect as well as the sense of having control over something tangible in their lives I wonder if there is more to doing art therapy. There is abundant literature regarding people with severe chronic illnesses like Van Gogh and other great artists like Salvador Dali and Horst Aschermann both believed to have suffered from PD in which these artists used art to help not only cope with their disease but also help them heal physically, mentally and spiritually. This form of healing has dated back to ancient times for the same purposes. However, there is a scarcity of literature delineating any motor or non-motor effects on the Parkinson's individual despite the many self-reports and accounts of increased artistic expression with PD. I have witnessed this phenomenon of improved motor skills first hand in my grandfather with dementia due to strokes and in my own Parkinson's patients; so I have set about to investigate further the relationship of art therapy and effect on the Parkinson's brain. I asked a number of patients who have been involved in art therapy and in choir (artistic voice therapy) to fill out a questionnaire to see if there was actual improvement of motor symptoms vs. only a sense of overall wellbeing from participation in these activities.

### Biography

Maria L De Leon is Neurologist, who completed her Post-graduate Movement Disorder Fellowship Training at Baylor College of Medicine in 1999. Recently, she published her first book- “*Parkinson's Diva: A Woman's Guide to Parkinson's Disease*”. Currently, she is working on her second book. She is a Consultant and frequent Guest Lecturer for the School of Social Work at Stephen F. Austin University and for the Muhammad Ali Center of Parkinson's, Hispanic Outreach Program Maria established “defeatparkinsons”. She is also currently involved in the Hispanic Subcommittees of the upcoming World Parkinson Congress. She is former recipient of the Association of American University Women Award for her work in the field of medicine.

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