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Application of magic in healthcare: A scoping review

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Introduction: The art and science of magic traces back to ancient days. Physicians are often compared to magicians metaphorically. Nonetheless, there exist various genuine applications of magic in the healthcare setting.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore and summarize the literature reporting the applications of magic tricks or any derived techniques in healthcare or clinical environments.

Methods: A literature search was performed on ten databases: Medline, Embase, CINAHL, Cochrane Central, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, PEDro, Scopus, the International Index to Performing Arts, General OneFile and Newstand, to identify references. Relevant studies were charted, categorized and summarized.

Results: Twenty-nine relevant references were found, consisting of 20 peer-reviewed publications and nine non-academic, popular literature articles. Five distinct applications of magic in the clinical setting were identified: as an occupational therapy or physical therapy modality, as a kind of clinical communication skill, as humour therapy, as psychotherapy, and as a type of dexterity training for physicians. The literature showed an overall lack of high level evidence.

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