



Creative arts therapies provide effective support in the aftermath of trauma



Welcome to the first issue of *The Arts in Psychotherapy* for 2019; a special issue on Creative Arts Therapies and the Military. This special issue comprises research reports about contemporary work with former and current members of the armed services from five countries: Australia, Canada, Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The journal has regularly published research and case material about processes and outcomes of the creative arts therapy with veterans (for example, [Ali & Wolfert, 2016](#); [Story & Beck, 2017](#); [Walker, Kaimal, Koffman, & DeGraba, 2016](#)). However, this is a specific effort to bring the current work into focus within one volume. Credit is due to the exceptional energies and efforts of all involved, but particular thanks are owed to the special issue guest editors: Professors Craig Haen and Alisha Ali.

Across the many descriptions of this work in the special issue one immediately realises the complexity of the needs of active duty personnel, and veterans. Almost all publications refer to the stigma of psychological issues experienced by these groups, leading to poor uptake of available treatments, and low levels of treatment completion ([Brown, Grubaugh, Knapp, & Acierno, 2016](#)). If the creative arts therapies need to focus more specifically on evidence and outcomes – as the guest editors point out in the next section – more might be made of the intensive yet potentially non-invasive style of work possible, and the uptake and completion of the therapeutic journey within a strengths-based model of practice for military personnel.

At one level this special issue brings to light a vast array of practices within the creative arts therapies to support returned service personnel and/or those who are currently serving. The unremarked need for therapeutic services due to the traumatising effects of violence, through armed conflict and war, lies silently on every page. The strength of individuals working in the military who have survived these terrible events, and their willingness and effort in working towards safety and peace in the world is remarkable.

Apart from the countries represented in this special issue, there are of course many other populations affected by war; resulting in millions of people displaced and homeless. Many creative arts therapists also work with these refugees and asylum seekers; families, men, women

and children escaping unimaginable horrors ([Sajjani, Marxen, & Zarate, 2017](#)).

It is with considerable pride that this special issue presents the first analysis of song writing within music therapy sessions by active-duty service members with post-traumatic stress disorder, mild traumatic brain injury, and mental health challenges ([Bradt, Biondo, & Vaudreuil, 2019](#)). Fourteen songs written by 11 serving personnel receiving therapeutic support via music therapy were analysed revealing the struggles and challenges of the return home after active service.

As the creative arts therapies continue to work with the challenge of providing evidence, and the need for practitioners to have sustainable jobs and sustaining work, the journal provides a place to represent the best of the arts therapies internationally. Through the special issues, the regular issues, and the extensive range of research topics, the journal has positive impact on the various professions comprising the creative arts therapies, and in turn benefits the participants in the services creative arts therapists provide.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2019.05.001>