



Group Art Therapy project for healthcare workers involved in Rehabilitation

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Background

Healthcare worker burnout is an increasing concern, with multiple contributing factors including stress and isolation. Art therapy can provide a therapeutic outlet and supportive environment through creative expression.

A project envisioned by Dr Geoffrey Samuel, Head of Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, to create an art mural for Singapore General Hospital Singhealth Tower Ward 11A was conducted from July to December 2022. The primary aim was to improve team morale, bonding and camaraderie amongst healthcare workers. A secondary aim was to assess for positive trends in job satisfaction and employee engagement.

Methodology

A core multidisciplinary focus group of healthcare workers involved in Rehabilitation (including physicians, nurses and allied health) conceptualized the mural design based on the Rehabilitation Medicine department mission statement, *'To be a Centre of Excellence in the delivery of rehabilitation services so as to maximize our patients' functional recovery through team work and innovation'*. The mural features various visual elements that represent the different disciplines of Rehabilitation, working together to achieve a beautiful outcome for patients. It was brought to life by the talented artwork of Ms Rachel Chia, a speech therapist.

The painting of the mural was completed by an open studio approach with scheduled time slots facilitated by Ms Phylaine Toh, an art therapist. Participation was voluntary and open to all staff involved in the care of Rehabilitation Medicine patients from Ward 11A.

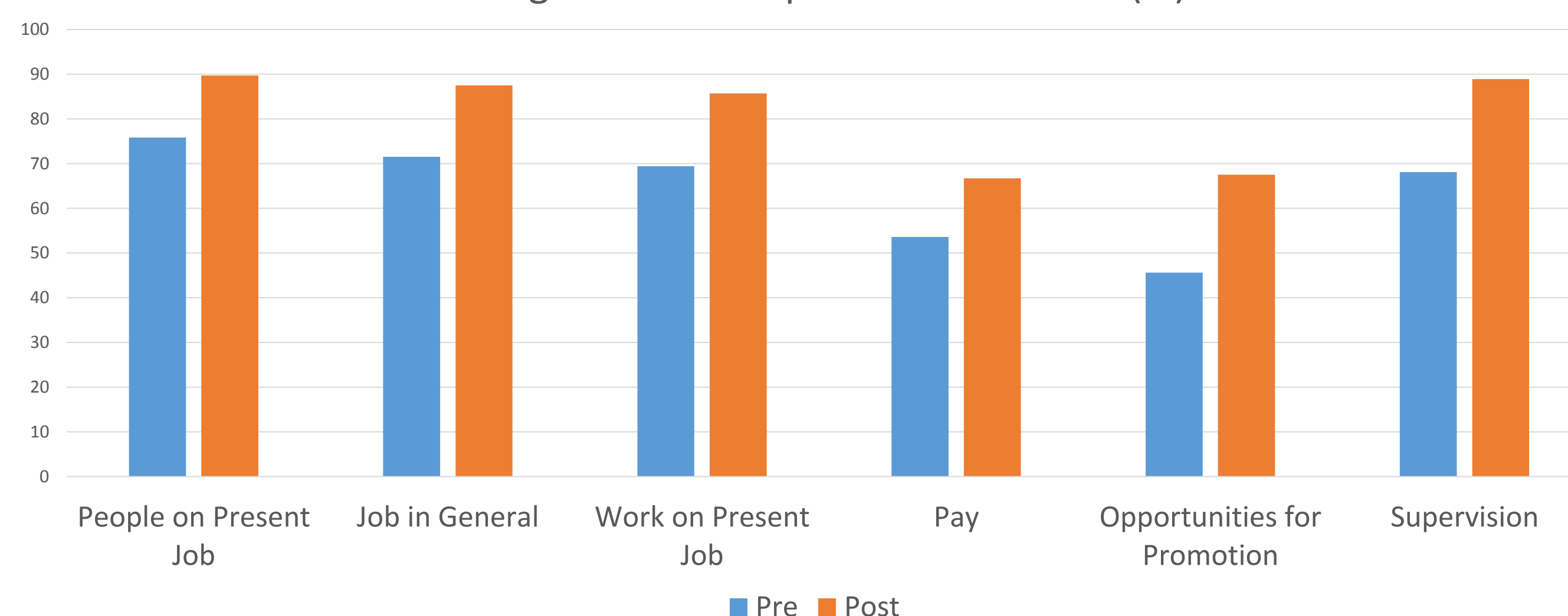
Indices of work satisfaction (Faces scale, Abridged Job Descriptive Index, Work and Wellbeing Survey- Short version) were measured pre- and post-participation through a voluntary anonymous survey. This was combined with qualitative feedback from participants.

Results

Data interpretation was limited by reduced survey participation with 20 responses obtained pre-project and 7 post-project. This was likely due to the small scale and informal nature of the survey. Nonetheless, positive trends were seen.

Job satisfaction measured on an 11-point visual scale of faces showing a gradation of emotions from negative to positive showed an improvement in the mean scores from 7.25 pre-intervention to 9.17 post-intervention.

Abridged Job Descriptive Index Results (%)



Top 5 Statements of the Work and Wellbeing Survey- Short version* that showed the greatest improvement in average pre and post scores

Statement	Pre	Post
My job inspires me	3.6	5
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	3.3	4.3
I am proud of the work I do	4.3	5.3
I am immersed in the work I do	4.1	5.1
I am enthusiastic about my job	3.8	4.7

*Scale points: 0 - 6

The priority and primary aim of this project was to facilitate team bonding and cohesion which was reflected in the enthusiastic participation and positive qualitative feedback. As one participant remarked, *'It helps me to have a moment of internal peace and feel relaxed'*. Participants reported it was an opportunity to interact with colleagues, providing a starting point to build better communication.

Conclusion

Mental wellbeing of healthcare workers is an important priority in healthcare human resource management. Group Art Therapy initiatives may be a consideration to provide support and stress relief. Taken in a broader context, projects such as this form part of efforts to enhance workplace relationships and improve employee engagement which can translate to better productivity.

The art mural was formally unveiled at the Rehabilitation Medicine Christmas party on 9 December 2022 and continues to spark conversations in Ward 11A.

