

Introduction

- Parkinson's Disease is a degenerative neurological process with significant motor and cognitive symptoms, leading to decreased quality of life.
- There is evidence of the benefits of art therapy and interactions between creative processes and dopamine states to improve symptoms.
- Little is known about the perspective of artists in this regard, with focuses on clinical symptoms. Studies rarely include the voices of professional artists.

To explore the interaction of art, PD, and dopaminergic medications within professional artists.

Hypothesis: Professional artists with PD will express improvement in symptoms and cognition due to their creative processes, supplementing their treatments.

Methods

Participants: 5 artists with self-reported PD on various dopaminergic therapies. Participants engaged in multiple art styles.

Interview: All artists were interviewed using the same 6 questions, in a virtual or in-person setting. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Analysis: Qualitative content analysis was performed by 2 authors (I.B. and C.G.) and consensus was reached.

- Would you say Parkinson's disease has impacted your life or vice versa?
- Have you seen a change in artistic style or subject matter since diagnosis?
- What is your most representative piece of art related to Parkinson's disease?
- When creating art, can you tell when you have higher versus lower levels of dopamine?
- Did you notice changes in your creativity during ON versus OFF times?
- Do you time your art creation with medication timing?

Results

4 Major Themes were identified after analysis

Theme 1. *Perceived impact of PD on daily functioning and quality of life*

- "it was only after being diagnosed with Parkinson's for about two years that I decided to pick up a pencil and a rubber and a normal sketch pad, and I started to draw the story of my diagnosis."
- "life with Parkinson's is like I'm slowing down and everything else is moving around faster".
- "It's always a better day if I have art."

Theme 2. *Change in art making style and technique due to PD*

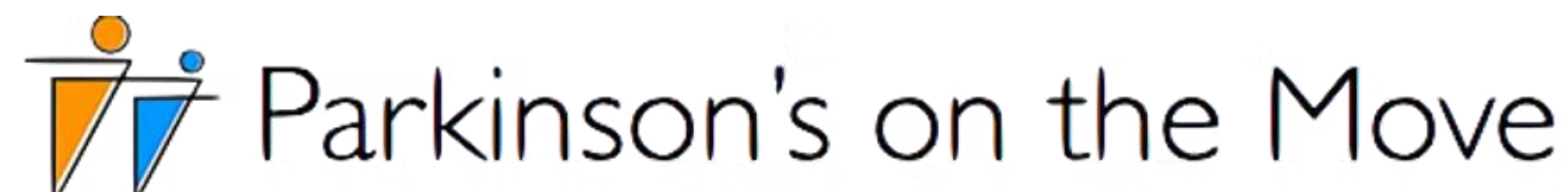
- [art has become] "less physical, but more conceptual"
- "At the start, I drew mainly on paper, with a pencil, and then went over it with a Faber Castell black ink pen. But if you made a mistake, you couldn't change it. The beauty of using an iPad was that if you made a mistake, then you could easily rectify it."

Theme 3. *Impact of dopaminergic medications and motor fluctuations on art making*

- "when I'm wearing off, I feel more relaxed. I feel as if I'm focused on something. It gives a better finish to the art, the slower that I do it."
- "It's usually the second thing when I'm making my art, the second thing I think about, as opposed to in life, it's the first thing I notice. My mind is elsewhere when I'm making my art."

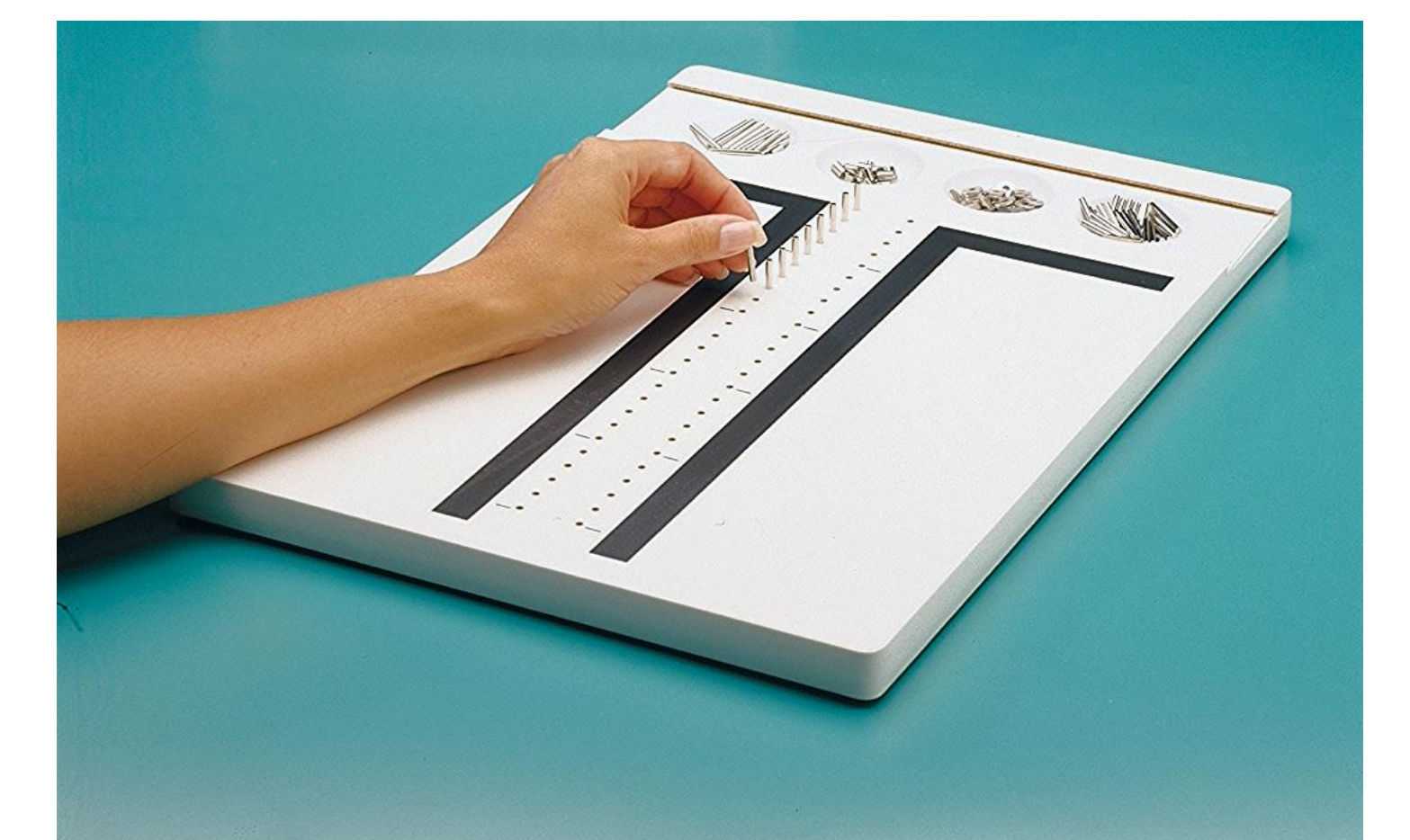
Theme 4. *Representing PD through art*

- Multiple artists commercialize their art and utilize it to educate about PD



Discussion & Significance

- Many artists displayed remarkable resilience and adaptability to continue art-making despite debilitating symptoms
- Silver lining within symptoms – "finer finish to art"
- Literature reveals novel creativity for PD patients related to dopaminergic therapy, in vein of impulse control disorders – none in our cohort
- Masking of PD symptoms by art despite wearing off of medications
- Supports art-based therapies that go beyond musical therapy for motor symptom control



References & Acknowledgements

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