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**Hanny Exiner Memorial Foundation**

**Research in Dance Movement Therapy**

**Things to think about before you submit an application for a HEMF or other research grant**

**Why research?**

* Is there a general or particular area I’m interested in?
* Are there questions I’m interested in exploring?

*What is the purpose of my doing a formal research study?*

* Is it about UNDERSTANDING – my own practice, specific aspects of dmt in general or with a specific population?
* Is it about PROVING the effectiveness of dance movement therapy (often for employers, or more generally, to prove the validity of dance movement as a therapy)?
* Or it may be a combination of those two?

*Your purpose will have some influence on the methodology you select.*

**What have others studied in the area I’m interested in researching? Is my research needed?**

* Search the dance movement therapy research literature in your area of interest (e.g. ageing, children with disabilities, dance movement therapy practice issues).
  + What are the key research questions that have been asked by other researchers and what have been the findings?
  + Has your question already been sufficiently studied and developed? Will your study merely repeat what has already been done or will your study enrich and increase the knowledge base around these questions (and therefore be worth doing)?
  + Or, does your study fill a gap – address an issue that has not yet been studied?
* It is also important to read some of the literature in the field of study (e.g. disability, medical etc.), so that you can place your study in context. How does it fit with the important issues in that field? This may also widen your own knowledge of the area you wish to study.

***This study of the literature is a vital part of the process of focussing your question.***

**Focussing your question**

Every research study starts with a broad question or even several questions, but the final study question needs to be much more focussed. The temptation, for the beginning researcher, is to try to answer too many questions in the one study. Not only does this lead to rather intellectually vague project submissions, but it becomes methodologically and practically impossible to carry out. You need to frame a question that can be addressed in the given context, within the timeframe, resources etc. available. So keep your question simple, your aims modest. Every research study ends with suggestions for further study – nothing is ever answered in one go.

***Do not underestimate the time and thought that needs to go into developing your question. It’s important not only as discussed above but also in terms of selecting an appropriate methodology****.*

**Methodology**

Methodologies are grounded in particular world views, and this will influence the research question and also the different methods you use to answer that question. The context within which you wish to conduct your study and to present it (e.g. are you seeking acceptance within a particular professional context) also influences the question and methodology. If you have not studied research methods, this is where advice from those who have done so may help. You can refer to the literature on dance movement therapy research studies which employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. HEMF’s listing of [Existing Australasian Research](http://dtaa.org.au/hemf/existing-australasian-research/)gives you information on research carried out by local dance movement therapists**.**There is also much information online which gives brief overviews of the different methodologies, one or other of which may be a useful framework for your research.

Ethical considerations are very important and something to take into account when developing your methodology, e.g. what will you need permission for. This is one aspect HEMF reviewers will look at carefully in terms of:

1. Your study methodology, viz. Have you included all the areas relating to data collection that consent is needed to cover?
2. Ethical conduct towards participants in the research. You need to spell out clearly every aspect that participants should give consent for. It is important that there is no vagueness, and no loopholes which would allow you to use data for which the participant has not given ‘INFORMED’ consent. [Refer to “Code of Ethics” on this page.](http://dtaa.org.au/exinermem/grant-criteria-research-in-dmt/)
3. In institutional settings, certain patients, residents, clients may be considered unable to give informed consent, and this will necessitate obtaining consent from the relevant family member/guardian. Even so, you should still aim to include the person in the decision making process.

The methodology section of your application should include the following:

* Who is participating in the study. How they will be recruited.
* Description of the research context – e.g. one hour session of dance movement therapy, once a week over 6 weeks.
* What will count as “data” for this research.
* Data Collection: What methods will you use to collect the data – observation, interview, journal etc.
* Data Analysis: How you will analyse the data you have collected.
* Ethical considerations

**Practicalities**

Last but not least, it is important to consider:

*Where?*

* In an organisation where you already work
* In an organisation that is willing to let you do your research with their clients and in their space.
* In a community space.

*Physical requirements?*

* A private and otherwise appropriate space
* Video or other equipment.

*What kind of support will you have in managing the project?*

* If you are doing this within a health/welfare organisation you already work in, will you have support from them in terms of:
  + Providing research participants
  + Providing a space
  + Back up – e.g. having a staff person assisting
  + Supervision
* If you are doing this independently in the community:
  + How will you find your group/individual?
  + Are you able to ensure your own safety and that of participants (especially important in community settings and if you are working alone) through adequate in-session support, supervision, etc.?
  + Do you have follow up provisions for any client who may experience difficulties during or after the research study?
  + Are you covered for Public Liability and Professional Indemnity.

**Writing up the application**

Having considered the above and the [grant criteria,](http://dtaa.org.au/exinermem/grant-criteria-research-in-dmt/) you can access and fill out the [HEMF application form](http://dtaa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/HEMF-application-form-for-2017.doc) which provides a clear framework for writing your research submission.