

The synergy between museums, culture, and well-being: A new way to health

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Abstract. As repositories of culture and history, museums play a key role in promoting well-being and fostering a healthier society. Through various mechanisms, such as education, social engagement and therapeutic interventions, museums contribute significantly to improving mental health, social cohesion and overall quality of life. For these reasons, it is necessary to promote the potential of museums so that culture and health become actors in an increasingly virtuous project and activity relationship.

Key words: museum, culture, well-being, health

To the Editor,

In recent years, museums have undergone a radical transformation from their traditional role. From static and conservative institutions, they have progressively evolved as dynamic and open entities, reflecting the evolving needs of contemporary society.

Embracing a more inclusive and participatory perspective, museums are no longer mere custodians of artworks or historical artifacts, but spaces that encourage active public involvement. Interactive exhibitions, immersive installations, and modern technologies have become central tools for engaging visitors, transforming the passivity of observation into active and dynamic experiences.

In addition, museums are expanding their thematic horizons, embracing social, political, and scientific topics relevant to contemporary society. This expansion of focus allows museums to become hubs for dialogue and debate on crucial issues, fostering critical and ethical reflection even on their own traditional work, with a more attentive approach to diversity, dialogue, and inclusion.

These efforts are aimed at representing more accurately the variety of cultural and historical perspectives

and to enhance previously neglected or marginalized voices and narratives (1).

Digitalization has played a pivotal role in this transformation, enabling museums to extend their impact beyond physical walls by making their collections accessible online, offering virtual experiences, and leveraging social media to engage a global audience (2). This virtual openness has not only democratized access to culture and enabled museums to reach a broader and more diverse audience but has also had a specific and significant impact on users' well-being during the pandemic (3).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of museum visits on mental health (4). Interaction with art, historical artifacts, and cultural exhibits has been associated with stress reduction, mood enhancement, and cognitive empowerment.

As widely acknowledged, museums are powerful educational tools significantly contributing to lifelong learning. By providing accessible information in various formats, museums empower individuals to interact with history, art, and science, fostering curiosity, intellectual stimulation, and ethical reflections (5). This ongoing quest for knowledge has been linked to improved mental acuity and a greater sense of fulfillment,

positively influencing individual well-being. Art therapy programs conducted in museums have shown promise in supporting individuals coping with mental health problems, trauma, or chronic illnesses (6).

The interplay among museums, culture, well-being, and health underscores the profound impact these institutions have on individual lives and societal well-being. Recognizing, in a context of increasing vulnerability, the multifaceted roles of museums—as educational spaces, promoters of mental health, facilitators of social cohesion, or platforms for therapeutic interventions—is crucial. Policymakers, healthcare professional, and society should support and capitalize on museums' potential to enhance well-being and encourage healthier communities by collaboratively crafting integrated, systematic, and holistic responses that bridge the realms of culture and social healthcare.

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