

MMFA-MdFC MUSEUM PRESCRIPTIONS: MUSEUM VISITS PRESCRIBED BY DOCTORS

**An international first: a pilot project targeting health and wellness through art
launched by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Médecins francophones du Canada**



Montreal, October 11, 2018 – Starting November 1, 2018, physicians who are members of Médecins francophones du Canada (MdFC) will be able to prescribe visits to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA). An adjuvant to conventional treatment, these unprecedented prescriptions will enable patients, accompanied by family or caregivers, to enjoy the health benefits of art on a free visit to the Museum.

This innovative collaboration between the MMFA and MdFC, which has several thousand physician members many of whom practice in the greater Montreal area, is strengthening the link between the medical and museum communities. It is the first initiative of its kind in the world.

The **MMFA-MdFC Museum Prescriptions** program is a new treatment tool that makes museum visits accessible to thousands of patients suffering from a variety of physical and mental health problems. By offering free admission to a safe, welcoming place, a relaxing, revitalizing experience, a moment of respite, and an opportunity to strengthen ties with loved ones, MMFA-MdFC Museum Prescriptions contribute to the patient's well-being and recovery.

In the first phase of the project, participating physicians will be able to issue up to 50 prescriptions for a visit to the MMFA collections and exhibitions (entry for up to 2 adults and 2 children aged 17 and under). To participate in the program, MdFC members are asked to register on the association's website.

"I am convinced that in the 21st century, culture will be what physical activity was for health in the 20th century. Cultural experiences will benefit health and wellness, just as engaging in sports contributes to fitness. Skeptics would do well to recall that just a hundred years ago, sports were believed to distort the body and threaten women's fertility. Just as doctors now prescribe exercise, they will be able to prescribe a visit to the MMFA. We are very proud of this ground-breaking pilot project, in partnership with the Médecins francophones du Canada." said **Nathalie Bondil**, Director General and Chief Curator of the MMFA, who has been envisioning this initiative since 2016.

"Médecins francophones du Canada promotes quality medicine with respect for human values, focused on the physical and mental well-being of every individual. Based on a global approach to health, the museum prescription program coincides perfectly with our commitment to recognizing the individuality and humanity of our patients. This is an innovative pilot project that we hope will spread across the country," noted **Dr. Diane Poirier**, President of MdFC and head of the intensive care unit at the Honoré-Mercier Hospital of the Montérégie East CIUSSS.

"I am very proud to see this program being realized. More and more studies show that contact with works of art has a real impact on people's physical and mental health. I am confident that my patients will be delighted to visit the Museum to ease their suffering, without any side effects," added **Dr. H  l  ne Boyer**, Vice-President of MFdC, Head of the Family Medicine Group at CLSC Saint-Louis-du-Parc, and associate professor in the Department of Family Medicine at McGill University.

The museum prescription program follows another pilot project, launched in 2017 in partnership with Dr. Asmae Boutaleb, which – on the basis of a questionnaire and an intake protocol – makes it possible to recommend group art therapy sessions at the Museum to certain patients, tailored to their state of health and pathologies.

Art is good medicine. The artistic experience and contact with works of art have a positive impact on health and well-being, as described in Pedro Mendon  a's meta-analysis of numerous studies, *Impacts favorables des arts sur la r  ussite   ducative des jeunes et dans diverses sph  res de la soci  t  * [Positive impact of the arts on the academic success of young people and in various segments of society] (Conseil des arts de Montr  al). The studies stipulate that the arts stimulate neuronal connectivity that supports psychological resilience; that they have a positive impact on attention and working memory; and that they promote relaxation, and richer, more complex neural activity.

The MMFA, a pioneer and major player in the field of wellness through the arts

The MMFA has become a real research laboratory for measuring the impact of art on health, with 10 clinical studies currently underway. These research projects are supervised by the MMFA Art and Health Committee, chaired by R  mi Quirion, Chief Scientist of Quebec. Created in 2017 at the initiative of Nathalie Bondil, the committee is made up of experts from the areas of health, art therapy, research, the arts, and philanthropy.

The MMFA creates new treatment avenues that combine experience of the arts with a holistic curative approach. Supported by the expertise of its Education and Wellness Division team, including a full-time art therapist (a museum first), it establishes programs developed *in situ* in collaboration with physicians, university researchers and hospital professionals.

The Museum's projects are geared to a variety of clientele: people with eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or intellectual challenges; victims of breast cancer; people suffering from cardiac arrhythmia, epilepsy, language or sensory disorders, or mental health issues; the elderly; and people with Alzheimer's disease.

With the inauguration of the Michel de la Cheneli  re International Atelier for Education and Art Therapy in 2016, the Museum expanded its actions in support of wellness and health. With spaces dedicated to art therapy and a medical consultation room, this facility provides an unprecedented practice framework for medical and community professionals.

The MMFA also is involved in the training of future physicians by offering McGill University medical students work-study workshops aimed at refining their interpretive skills.

Acknowledgments

The MMFA thanks its major patron, Michel de la Chenelière, who has enabled the Museum to make education and art therapy an essential sphere of activity, and who encourages its development. The Museum's Rossy Art Therapy and Wellness Programme is supported by the Rossy Family Foundation. The Museum also wishes to thank Cynthia Shewan for her support of this program.

From left to right: Michel de la Chenelière, President, Fondation de la Chenelière, and great patron of the MMFA; Dr. Johanne Blais, member of the board of directors, Médecins francophones du Canada (MdFC); Dr. Hélène Boyer, Vice-President, MdFC; Directrice générale of MdFC; Nathalie Bondil, Director General and Chief Curator, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA); Dr. Diane Poirier, President, MdFC; Nicole Parent, Director General, MdFC; and Thomas Bastien, Director of Education and Wellness, MMFA; at the Médecins francophones du Canada convention, Montreal, October 10, 2018. Photo: Pierre Longtin.

– 30 –

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About the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Boasting more than 1.3 million visitors annually, the MMFA is one of Canada's most visited museums and the eighth-most visited museum in North America. The Museum's original temporary exhibitions combine various artistic disciplines – fine arts, music, film, fashion and design – and are exported around the world. Its rich encyclopedic collection, distributed among five pavilions, includes international art, world cultures, decorative arts and design, and Quebec and Canadian art. The Museum has seen exceptional growth in recent years with the addition of two new pavilions: the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, in 2011, and the Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion for Peace, in 2016. The MMFA complex also includes Bourgie Hall, a 460-seat concert hall, as well as an auditorium and a movie theatre. The MMFA is one of Canada's leading publishers of art books in French and English, which are distributed internationally. The Museum also houses the Michel de la Chenelière International Atelier for Education and Art Therapy, the largest educational complex in a North American art museum, enabling the MMFA to offer innovative educational, wellness and art therapy programmes. mbam.qc.ca

About Médecins Francophones du Canada (MdFC)

Since 1902, Médecins francophones du Canada has encouraged physicians to embrace goals that promote quality medicine with respect for human values. Our action focuses on continuing education, physician well-being, networking of French-speaking doctors, promotion of the French language in medicine, the humanization of care, and socio-medical development, as well as health and the environment. medecinsfrancophones.ca