

# 'A Man Paints with His Brains and Not with His Hands' (Michelangelo)

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## Key Words

Stroke · Drawing · Hemiplegia

## Abstract

The goals of a post-stroke rehabilitation plan are very specific to each patient. The side of the body affected by hemiplegia can influence the rehabilitation plan, as people with right-sided hemiplegia may also have difficulties with speech and language (aphasia). Because of the aphasia, drawing may remain a crucial instrument of creative expression and the clinical case presented highlights how this goal may also be successfully achieved in the elderly by using the left hand.

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The illustrator of this drawing is a 77-year-old gentleman who had a thromboembolic stroke at the age of 70. It left him with non-fluent aphasia and right hemiplegia. Without being artistically active while being right-handed before the cerebrovascular event, he has been able to overcome his handicap by left-handed drawing. Soon after his hospital discharge he began practicing holding a pencil with his left hand and started squiggling and doodling. Having found in his sketching a way of expressing his thoughts and feelings, he began drawing even with greater keenness, essentially incorporating drawing into



Color version available online

his daily rehabilitation routine at home. He has found drawing to be a profound healing tool not only providing a way of expression, but also improving his self-esteem and self-worth. He did not regain the use of the dominant right hand and arm, nor his speech. He has no symptoms or signs of depression and he has not used antidepressants since the stroke. He is currently attending arts classes on a weekly basis.

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0304-324X/11/0576-0572\$38.00/0

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