

Music Therapy An Alternative Medicine

Keith Brown

Northern Illinois University

## Music Therapy An Alternative Medicine

Today is any old regular day. You go down to the local drug store and pick up your prescription for the drug that your doctor prescribed. When you get home, you look at the bottle and read the instructions. You pour a glass of water and swallow your pills. Odds are that you have probably done this once before.

For some people this is not a common occurrence. Believe it or not there are people avoid what some people take for granted. There are people who do not take traditional prescription medication. There are many reasons that some do this. Some believe that these medications are not natural and refuse to take a drug that was created in a lab. Others try to “tough it out” and go without any form of medication. No matter what their reason for opting out of traditional medication is, there are many alternatives to these medications. There are natural plants and remedies, as well as numerous therapy techniques and also ancient practices such as acupuncture. One of these alternatives is Music therapy.

Music therapy is a form of alternative medicine that uses music to improve the physical, mental, emotional wellbeing of a person. Music therapy is one of multiple types of therapy based around art; others include dance therapy and art therapy. What makes music therapy so unique is that there is little physical requirements. There is no physical medication to ingest and no movement required. The only requirement to this is the ability to hear and listen to music, which is something most of us do every day. The fact that music therapy is an alternative medicine it is not mainstream and most people have not tried it, but for except those who may not believe in traditional medication. Despite its lack of popularity, Music therapy is an alternative to traditional medication that more people should consider.

## Music Therapy An Alternative Medicine

One way that Music therapy can be used as an alternative medicine is to lower anxiety.

An example of this is to lower anxiety in patients about receiving treatment in a hospital. There was a study done at Ege University to see the effects of music therapy by lowering anxiety in patients receiving mechanical ventilatory support. According to Ersu Korhan (2011) “Repertory rate... and blood pressure were reduced significantly after completion of music therapy” (1032). This shows how patients can use music therapy to lower anxiety instead of using traditional medication to do so. In this case patients received “60 minutes of music therapy... using media players (mp3) and headphones. Another reason that this would be effective is that music therapy eliminates the possibility of addiction to medication. Due to the ease of application and benefits of music therapy in this situation, more people should consider music therapy as an alternative to traditional medication.

Another example that shows the effectiveness of music therapy reducing anxiety is with patients going through chemotherapy. In a study done by the National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan, they tested the effectiveness of music therapy and verbal relaxation on patients receiving chemotherapy. The study found that “music therapy had a greater positive on postchemotherapy anxiety than verbal relaxation and the control group” (Susan Fetzer 2010, pg. 988). According to Fetzer(2010) “music therapy and verbal relaxation are effective in reducing chemotherapy-induced anxiety” (pg.990). The Music therapy group in this experiment went through a one hour music therapy session. This session proved to be very effective as it reduced anxiety more than both the verbal relaxation and control groups. Once again, Due to the ease of application and benefits of music therapy in this situation, more people should consider music therapy as an alternative to traditional medication.

## Music Therapy An Alternative Medicine

Not only can music therapy be used as a treatment, it can be used as a supplemental treatment. An example of this is music therapy being used to open up patients for group cognitive behavior therapy. This was done in a study by University of Queensland, Australia, schools of Psychology and Music. The study was done in the form of a 7 week music therapy trial. The study found that 83% of the group answered that they would try music therapy again and 46% said that music therapy would help them feel more a part of the group. Genevieve Dingle (2008) of the school of Psychology says that “Music therapy is a promising approach to improving engagement in substance abuse treatment groups”(pg. 190). This is very helpful because these substance abuse treatments are very effective but it can be difficult for the members to feel comfortable to communicate with others. Music therapy shows promising remarks to help the patients feel comfortable in participating in these discussion groups.

Another method that music therapy can be used as an alternative medicine is in the care of those with behavioral disorders. There are many behavioral disorders that music therapy is a treatment option. Two examples of this are autism and dementia. In a study done in Italy back in 2009, Music therapy was used to reduce behavioral disturbances in elderly dementia patients. According to A. Raglio (2009) “MT [music therapy] treatment resulted to be more effective than standard care to reduce behavioral disorders” (900). This is an example in which music therapy is not only an alternative method but is actually more effective than the traditional method. The traditional method for treating dementia patients is through drugs. This shows how music can be more effective than traditional medication and for this reason, music therapy should be considered as a definite option and more people should be aware of this.

The application of music upon ones choosing is also effective in a stressful situation. This can be considered self led music therapy. A study done at the University of Wolverhampton, UK

## Music Therapy An Alternative Medicine

shows that showed that music can increase ones mood and decrease negative feelings. According to Andrew Lane (2009) "Participants in both music groups reported increased pleasant emotions and decreased unpleasant emotions following intervention"(pg.456). This shows that even if one is not on music therapy, you can still make yourself feel better by listening to music.

Music therapy has helped many people with their problems and continues to every day. From everything to pre or post-surgery anxiety to reducing behavioral disturbances, music therapy continues to show its effectiveness as an alternative medicine. Not only has its been shown effective as a replacement to traditional treatments, it in some cases has proven to be more effective than traditional treatments. Despite its lack of popularity, Music therapy is an alternative to traditional medication that more people should consider.

## Music Therapy An Alternative Medicine

Korhan, E., Khorshid, L., & Uyar, M. (2011). The effect of music therapy on physiological signs of anxiety in patients receiving mechanical ventilatory support. *Journal Of Clinical Nursing, 20(7/8)*, 1026-1034.

doi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2010.03434.x

Raglio, A. A., Bellelli, G. G., Traficante, D. D., Gianotti, M. M., Ubezio, M. C., Gentile, S. S., & ... Trabucchi, M. M. (2010). Efficacy of music therapy treatment based on cycles of sessions: A randomised controlled trial. *Aging & Mental Health, 14(8)*, 900-904. doi:10.1080/13607861003713158

ei-Feng, L., Ya-Ju, H., Yu-Yun, H., Fetzer, S., & Mei-Chi, H. (2011). A randomised controlled trial of the effect of music therapy and verbal relaxation on chemotherapy-induced anxiety. *Journal Of Clinical Nursing, 20(7/8)*, 988-999. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2010.03525.x

Dingle, G. A., Gleadhill, L., & Baker, F. A. (2008). Can music therapy engage patients in group cognitive behaviour therapy for substance abuse treatment?. *Drug & Alcohol Review, 27(2)*, 190-196.

doi:10.1080/09595230701829371

Lane, A. M., Davis, P. A., & Devonport, T. J. (2011). Effects of music interventions on emotional states and running performance. *Journal Of Sports Science & Medicine, 10(2)*, 400-407.