Music Therapy: The use of music either during, or as a clinical therapy intervention to realize a specific goal. Those who practice music therapy are trained therapists that utilize at least one form of music delivery technique including production, reception, and reproduction. The intended outcomes include communication development, cognitive improvement, motor skill enhancement, pain management, or emotional support.

As healthcare practitioners look for strategies to support improved health outcomes, music therapy has increased its visibility. The intended impact varies, based on the type of music used, and the intended level of patient interaction. Recent efforts to incorporate music therapy in treatment include areas to address communication, behavioral therapy, pain management, depression, dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, Schizophrenia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Parkinson’s disease. Additionally, music has been incorporated as a component of medical procedures to minimize the impact of stress and anxiety. In a review of current literature, studies indicate a number of positive effects on health outcomes of patients across various settings and health conditions.

A benefit of music therapy is that unlike pharmacological approaches to treating pain (emotional or physical), the use of music has no known adverse side effects. Rather, some studies have shown that the use of music as a component of therapy decreases levels of anxiety more so than the use of some medications.

### Study Outcomes

- **Decreased:**
  - Pain levels
  - Stress levels
  - Anxiety
  - Depression

- **Increased:**
  - Coping skills
  - Motor skills
  - Group cohesiveness

- **Improvement in:**
  - Ability to communicate
  - Mood and motivation

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8. Bringman, GieseckeK, and Thome, Relaxing MusicAs Pre-Medication Before Surgery: A Randomized Controlled Trial, 53(6) ACTA ANAESTHESIOLOG SCAND, 759 (2009); Ovayolu et al., Listening To Turkish Classical Music Decreases Patients Anxiety, Pain, Dissatisfaction And The Dose Of Sedative And Analgesic Drugs During Colonoscopy, 12 WORLD JOURNAL GASTROENTEROL., 7532 (2006).
Research indicates that the use of music provides a "calming effect" resulting in reduced anxiety, reduced pulse rate, and lowered blood pressure. Additionally, studies examining the impact of music therapy on preterm infants have found positive effects on physiological outcomes including respiratory rate as well as behavioral impacts observed through reduced crying and increased body movements.

In a review of empirical research that examined the impact of music on trauma, depression, and substance abuse, researchers found that overall, studies reported positive outcomes including:
- decreased depression
- enhanced interpersonal relationships
- improved communication
- increased motivation
- improved coping skills

Another systematic review that examined seventeen studies incorporating music through reception (listening) techniques to address depression found that music did assist in alleviating symptoms, but only when implemented over time.

**Considerations**

The implementation of music therapy varies across studies including the intended interaction level of the patient, the music type and style, the health outcome focus, the frequency of the intervention, and the setting. To better inform the field on the impact of music therapy, it will be important to examine how these differences impact outcomes.

The frequency and technique type are key considerations to examine. A noted limitation by researchers has been the inconsistency of intervention frequency where exposure can vary from a one-time interval to multiple iterations over time. Some studies examining the effect of music on health outcomes did not control for frequency variations as a result of the setting structure. Additionally, outcomes have varied based on technique type used and patient preference on music style.

Music therapy incorporates a variety of approaches that include listening to music, singing, and even playing instruments. While such flexibility provides practitioners the freedom to adapt practices to their context, a lack of standardized models increases the risk of little to no impact on the intervention used. These considerations should drive continued research to better address the incorporation of music therapy in practice.

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