Music Therapy in the Medical Setting

Presented by Alejandra Ferrer, MM, MT-BC

What is Music Therapy?

The American Music Therapy Association (2005) defines music therapy as the clinical & evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

Dynamics of Music Therapy

Music Therapy is a systematic process; it is not a series of random events. Music therapy is “purposeful, organized, methodical, knowledge-based, and regulated” (Bruscia, 1998).


Music Therapy Techniques

- Vocal and instrumental improvisation
- Songwriting
- Lyric analysis
- Music and imagery
- Singing
- Receptive music listening
- Music and movement

Medical Music Therapy Research Outcomes

- Decreased anxiety
- Reduced pain perception and discomfort
- Positive changes in mood
- Less muscle tension
- Lower blood pressure and reduced heart rate
- Reduced nausea and emesis
- Improved respiration
- Decreased use of analgesic medication
- Increased immune system response (salivary immunoglobulin A)
- Reduced stress (cortisol)
- Enhanced energy levels
- Higher Quality of Life scores

Human Response to Music

- Increased dopamine, prolactin & oxytocin
- Increased salivary immunoglobulin A (SIgA) & Natural Killer (NK) Cells
- Counteracts biological stress response
- Organizes physical movement
- Positive changes in heart rate, blood pressure & respiration rate
- Triggers musical chills - “Frisson Experience”
JCFL: Music Therapy

- Drumming for Life
- Victory Choir
- Relaxation through Music
- Enhance Your Breathing through the Harmonica
- Finding Meaning through Songwriting and Song Discussion
- Making Meaningful Music through Guitar
- African Rhythms Ensemble
- Enhance Your Breathing through the Recorder
- Self-Care through Music
- Individual Sessions by Referral (Inpatient & Outpatient)

Any Questions?