



American Music Therapy Association

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Music Therapy and Dementia – Evidence Based Practice Support

Description: Music Therapy (MT) is the clinical and 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. MT with persons with dementia and elderly is a psychotherapeutic method that uses musical interaction as a means of communication and expression. The aim of therapy is to help people to improve and maintain function, engage and improve social interaction, improve quality of life and to address issues of aging and brain function they may not be able to using words alone. Interventions can also aim to decrease agitated behavior. MT sessions include the use of active music making, related movement, music listening, and discussion. MT includes both individual and group therapy.

Standardization: MT sessions are documented in a treatment plan and delivered in accordance with standards of practice. Music selections and certain active music making activities are modified for client preferences and individualized needs (i.e., song selection and music may vary). Toolkits are available via AMTA and publications.

Replication: Yes; has been used with different providers and populations also.

Meaningful Outcomes: Global state, mental state and cognition, general functioning, social functioning, quality of life, language skills.

Research:

Dementia and Geriatrics

Brotons M, Koger SM. The impact of music therapy on language functioning in dementia. Journal of Music Therapy 2000;37(3):183-95.

Conclusions: Performance during music was better than conversation for both speech content and fluency.

Clair AA. The Effect of Singing on Alert Responses in Persons with Late Stage Dementia. Journal of Music Therapy 1996;XXXIII(4):234-247

Conclusions: Individuals in the late stages of dementia respond to and interact with music.

Clark ME, Lipe AW, Bilbrey M. Use of music to decrease aggressive behaviors in people with dementia. Journal of Gerontological Nursing 1998;24:7:10-17.

Conclusions: Results indicated that during the music condition, decreases occurred in 12 of 15 identified aggressive behaviors. Decreases were significant ($p < 0.05$) for the total number of observed behaviors and for hitting behaviors. During the music condition, caregivers frequently reported improved affect and a general increase in cooperation with the bathing task.

Gerdner LA. Effects of individualized versus classical "relaxation" music on the frequency of agitation in elderly persons with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. International Psychogeriatrics 2000;12(1):49-65.

Conclusions: Frequency of agitated behaviors was significantly less both during and after individualized music. No significant difference between baseline and first 20 minutes of classical minutes. Significant decrease did occur in the final 10 minutes. Both types of music were more effective than baseline, with more effect for individualized music.

Groene RW. Effectiveness of music therapy 1:1 intervention with individuals having senile dementia of the Alzheimer's type. Journal of Music Therapy 1993;30(3):138-157.

Conclusions: Significant difference in mean seating/proximity time in favor of music over the reading treatment. There was a significant difference between the mean wandering scores during the 5 music sessions versus the 2 reading sessions of the mostly music group in favor of the music sessions.

Hanser SB, Thompson LW. Effects of a music therapy strategy on depressed older adults. Journal of Gerontology 1994;49(6):P265-9.

Conclusions: Participants in both music conditions performed significantly better than the controls on standardized tests of depression, distress, self-esteem, and mood. These improvements were clinically significant and maintained over a 9-month follow-up period.

Kroger, S.M., Chapin, K., Brotons, M. Is Music Therapy an Effective Intervention for Dementia? A Meta-Analytic Review of Literature. Journal of Music Therapy 1999 Spring; 36(1): 2-15.

Conclusions: Overall, the effect of music/music therapy was found to be highly significant.

Brotons, M., Koger, S. M. and Pickett-Cooper, P. K.. Music and dementias: A review of literature. Journal of Music Therapy 1997; 34 (4), 204-245.

Conclusions: Music experiences can be structured to enhance social/emotional skills, to assist in recall and language skills and to decrease problem behaviors.

Brotons, M. and Pickett-Cooper, P. K. The effects of music therapy intervention on agitation behaviors of Alzheimer's Disease Patients. Journal of Music Therapy 1996; 33 (1), 2 – 18.

Conclusions: Music is effective in decreasing the frequency of agitated and aggressive behaviors.