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The effects of music therapy interventions on symptom management in palliative medicine patients

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The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of music therapy sessions on pain, anxiety, shortness of breath, depression, and mood; to identify specific interventions that are effective and common in addressing these symptoms; and to investigate the effects of gender, age, and type of cancer in patients with pain and anxiety who experienced music therapy. This was a retrospective study of data obtained over an almost 12 year timespan. A total of 5,970 records were included in the database representing 1,570 patients. The data file utilized for this study represented 547 patients whose initial music therapy sessions contained documentation of at least one variable. Among the 547 patients, 293 had complete data on all outcomes measures and were included in the data analysis. This study demonstrated the importance of music therapy for addressing symptoms and behaviors of palliative medicine patients. There was a positive and statistically and/or clinically significant effect on pain, anxiety, depression, shortness of breath, mood, facial expression, and verbalization. Commonalities regarding which interventions were most commonly used to address each symptom; as well as trends as to which interventions were most effective in addressing these symptoms were identified. Results also include connections between the effect on change in each of the variables as compared with age, gender, diagnosis, goals, and interventions.

Biography

Lisa Gallagher, MA, MT-BC is the Manager, Music Therapy for the Arts and Medicine Institute at Cleveland Clinic. She is an administrator, clinical music therapist, author, and researcher. She is a frequent presenter at local, national, and international levels, and she has published several articles and book chapters. In addition, she is the recipient of the 2007 Great Lakes Region of the American Music Therapy Association Scholarly Activity Award, the 2008 Blair L. Sadler International Healing Arts Award, and the 2013 Association for Ohio Music Therapists Past Presidents Club Award. She is the former Chair of the Certification Board for Music Therapists' Board of Directors, and she currently is the immediate Past President of the Great Lakes Region of the American Music Therapy Association.

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