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# Music Therapy Effects on Dementia

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# Music Therapy Effects on Dementia

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## What We Learned

Individualized music therapy has a significantly positive impact on anxiety, aggression, depression, and cognitive ability levels in persons with dementia. You do NOT need to be a trained musician or music therapist to apply music as “medicine”.

### Background

This was a literature review project undertaken in a required course entitled “Applied Nursing Research” for junior nursing students at West Chester University. Four articles on the topic of music therapy in persons with dementia were selected for the purpose of literature review and dissemination.

### Purpose & Aims

- The impact of music therapy on dementia-related cognitive and behavioral issues was examined to look for common themes in how music therapy affected persons with dementia or Alzheimer’s Disease (AD).
- The literature review aimed to examine the specific role nurses play in providing music therapy in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and at home for patients with dementia or AD.
- Possibilities were explored with regard to expanding the application of music therapy to benefit other patient populations.

### Sample

- Participants were all over the age of 60.
- All were diagnosed with either dementia or Alzheimer’s Disease.
- Participants included those living at home, in a nursing home, or in an assisted care facility.
- Participants were from a wide range of countries, including Taiwan, France, and the United States.

### Methods

- Articles for lit review were selected via EBSCO and CINAHL.
- All articles were peer-reviewed and published between 2009 and 2014; nurse-authored or nursing journal articles were preferred.
- Search terms were “music therapy and dementia” and “music therapy and cognitive disorders”

### Results



**~Any nurse can easily apply music therapy; surprisingly, music therapy delivered by recordings had a greater impact than music done live by trained therapists!**

**~Across all studies, subjects exposed to music therapy showed significant changes in at least some dementia-related behaviors and symptoms.**

### Discussion

- Since benefits of music therapy were not limited by the lack of musical ability and/or training as a music therapist, this warrants a closer look by nurses as to how to implement musical interventions into standard nursing practice.
- Music therapy can be clinically useful across many areas, not only for older adult populations with dementia, but also pediatrics, etc.
- Music is a cost-effective, non-pharmacological intervention and is simple to implement.

### Next Steps

- More research with larger sample sizes is needed to broaden our knowledge of the benefits of music therapy.
- Most current research studies were done abroad, so more study samples are needed from the U.S.
- Other patient populations which could benefit from music therapy interventions need to be identified and studied.
- Development and implementation of a training model for caregivers and nursing staff is needed.
- Creation of music libraries across clinical settings to cater to diverse musical interests is warranted, as well as equipment funding for therapy delivery devices (CD’s and CD players, etc.).

### Limitations

- Limited number of studies exist from the U.S., so research articles from outside the U.S. were included in lit review.
- Limited number of recent, peer-reviewed studies available.

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