Music Therapy Improves Post-operative Outcomes- a Special Perspective

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The use of music as a therapeutic option to support health dates back to ancient times. Some of the earliest notable mentions in Western history are found in the writings of ancient Greek Philosophers Aristotle and Plato. In contemporary history, Michigan State University offered the first music therapy degree program worldwide in 1944. From that point, music therapy has established itself as a growing health profession for inpatients treatment of psychiatric diseases like schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses, psychosis, neurological diseases like multiple sclerosis, dementia, or for the treatment of patients with chronic pain.

Music therapy is a technique of complementary medicine that uses music prescribed in a skilled manner by trained therapists. Programs are designed to help patients overcome physical, emotional, intellectual, and social challenges. Applications range from improving the well being of geriatric patients in nursing homes to lowering the stress level and pain of women in labor. Music therapy is used in many settings, including schools, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, hospice, nursing homes, community centers, and sometimes even in the home. Aspects of music therapy include making music, listening to music, writing songs, and talking about lyrics. Music therapy may also involve imagery and learning through music. The patient does not need to have any musical ability to benefit from music therapy. As both an art and a science, music therapy utilizes music as a prescribed therapeutic stimulus to achieve non-musical goals. Treatment involves strategic use of music, focused for healing, learning, coping, and change.

According to the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT, 1996) Music therapy is the use of music and/or musical elements (sound, rhythm, melody and harmony) by a qualified music therapist with a client or group, in a process designed to facilitate and promote communication, relationships, learning, mobilisation, expression, organization and other relevant therapeutic objectives, in order to meet physical, emotional, mental, social and cognitive needs. Music therapy aims to develop potentials and/or restore functions of the individual so that he or she can achieve better intra- and inter-personal integration and, consequently, a better quality life through prevention, rehabilitation or treatment. Effectiveness of music therapy has been revealed in primary care settings for the treatment of chronic diseases, in particular for treatment of tinnitus, cardiac rehabilitation patients or oncological patients.

Patients undergoing surgical treatment for coronary artery disease and valvular heart disease begin to experience anxiety when the decision to undergo surgery is made and they remain anxious for up to three months after surgery. Patients with higher anxiety and depression levels preoperatively have
higher postoperative pain and analgesic requirements. Postoperative anxiety can cause increased sensitivity to noise, which results in increased autonomic responses, sensory overload and sleep deprivation leading to physiological problems that can increase the duration of hospital stay. There is a need for interventions to reduce stress, pain and anxiety by providing an environment that is more conducive to healing and can be used as an integral part of the multimodal regimen administered to the patients undergoing surgery. One possible treatment could be music intervention, used as an 'audioanalgesia', audioanxiolytic and/or 'audio relaxation' defined as 'a supportive source of environmental sound that stimulates and maintains relaxation as well reduces or controls distress by a self-management technique.' It has been recommended that peri-operative stress can be controlled with non-pharmacological methods. In this regard, post operative music therapy has been used in a few studies. Thoracic or abdominal surgeries are accompanied by postoperative pain and anxiety. Anxiety is associated with increases in respiratory rate, heart rate and blood pressure and other changes that can have a negative impact on the postoperative recovery of the patients. Pre recorded music or music therapy offered by a trained music therapist has been employed as a non-pharmacological intervention to reduce pain, anxiety, and physiological parameters in patients who have undergone surgical procedures, in certain studies. Thus, it can be used as a supportive source to induce relaxation and in turn decrease the pain levels and hence, the consumption of analgesics by the patients. This will, without doubt reduce the incidence of postoperative complications and will ensure speedy recovery of the patients. Music therapy may benefit by rehabilitating the patients postoperatively at a physiological, functional and a psychological level. Moreover, it may reduce the hospital stay of the patients as well as lessen the total health care costs and burden. The knowledge of beneficial end results of music therapy among Physical therapists is scarce and at an immature phase. Therapists should implement and evaluate the effects of Music therapy on their patient’s outcomes. Further studies on the effect of music therapy on postoperative status in patients undergoing thoracic or abdominal surgeries are needed.

Conflicts of interest:

None identified and/or declared.

References:


