

The Study of Music Therapy on Seniors in Assisted Living Centers - the Effect and Future Application in an Aging Community

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Abstract: Music therapy is a form of therapy that utilizes music to improve physical, emotional, cognitive, and social functioning in individuals. Seniors, in particular, can benefit greatly from music therapy due to its ability to address age-related issues such as dementia, loneliness, depression, and anxiety. In this review, we will examine recent studies on music therapy for seniors and explore the benefits, methods, and challenges of implementing this therapy.

Keywords: Music therapy seniors physical emotional cognitive social functioning

1. Introduction

Music therapy is an evidence-based clinical practice that uses music to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals of all ages, including seniors with chronic diseases. Chronic diseases are long-term health conditions that include heart disease, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, and dementia, among others. These diseases are the leading cause of death and disability worldwide and are a significant burden on the healthcare system. Music therapy has been shown to have positive effects on seniors' chronic diseases by improving their quality of life, reducing symptoms, and enhancing their overall well-being.

2. Methodology

Music therapy for seniors can be administered in several ways, including group or individual sessions, listening to music, playing musical instruments, and singing. Group sessions have been found to be particularly effective in improving social functioning, reducing loneliness, and promoting feelings of belonging (Clark et al., 1998). One-on-one sessions can be tailored to meet the individual needs of the senior, providing personalized attention and promoting emotional expression (Guetin et al., 2009).

3. Results

Several studies have highlighted the numerous benefits of music therapy for seniors. A study by Vink (2019) found that music therapy improved the quality of life of seniors in long-term care, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Another study by Guetin (2009) demonstrated that music therapy reduced behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia, improving mood and cognitive functioning. Music therapy has also been shown to improve sleep quality and reduce pain in seniors with chronic pain (Park et al., 2020).

In terms of descriptive statistics, several studies reported improvements in seniors' physical and mental health following music therapy sessions. For example, in a study by Chan et al. (2010), seniors who participated in a 12-week music therapy program showed significant improvements in grip strength, balance, and gait speed compared to those who did not participate. Additionally, a study by Gómez-Romero et al. (2017) reported significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and stress among seniors with Alzheimer's disease following music therapy sessions.

Several studies also reported inferential statistics, providing evidence of the effectiveness of music therapy in treating seniors' chronic diseases. For instance, a randomized controlled trial by Guétin et al. (2009) found that seniors with dementia who received

individualized music therapy showed significant improvements in cognitive function, behavioral symptoms, and overall quality of life compared to those who received standard care. Similarly, a study by Vaquero et al. (2018) found that seniors with Parkinson's disease who participated in a music therapy program showed significant improvements in motor function and quality of life compared to those who did not participate.

The implications of these results for music therapy and seniors' chronic diseases are significant. The evidence suggests that music therapy can improve physical and mental health outcomes for seniors with chronic diseases, making it a potentially valuable addition to standard medical care. Furthermore, the studies reviewed suggest that music therapy may be most effective when tailored to the specific needs of individual patients. This implies that music therapists should be trained to assess patients' needs and design personalized music therapy programs to achieve the best outcomes.

4. Discussion

Previous Research on Music Therapy and Seniors' Chronic Diseases Numerous studies have explored the effects of music therapy on seniors with chronic diseases. Music therapy has the potential to provide numerous benefits for seniors, including improved physical and mental health, increased social interaction and communication, and enhanced quality of life (Cooke, 2010; Gómez-Romero, 2020; Lai, 2010). In particular, music therapy has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of chronic conditions such as dementia, depression, and Parkinson's disease (Gómez-Romero, 2020; Guo, 2020). Additionally, music therapy can be tailored to the individual needs and preferences of each senior, making it a highly personalized form of therapy (Cooke, 2010).

Music therapy has demonstrated numerous achievements and opportunities for the aging community. One significant achievement is its ability to enhance the overall well-being and quality of life of seniors. As noted by de la Rubia Ortí (2021), music therapy interventions showed significant improvements in mood, social interactions, and self-esteem among seniors.

Another achievement of music therapy is its ability to alleviate chronic pain in seniors. According to a study by Lin (2020), music therapy had a significant effect on pain reduction among seniors with chronic pain. This finding is supported by Hsu (2022), which also reported significant reductions in pain levels among seniors following music therapy interventions.

In terms of opportunities, the aging population is growing rapidly, and music therapy presents a promising avenue for addressing the diverse needs of this population. The demand for music therapy among seniors is expected to increase in the coming years. Music therapy also offers a non-pharmacological alternative to traditional medical interventions, which may have unwanted side effects or may not be suitable for some seniors.

Possible Mechanisms of Action for Music Therapy have been discussed. The mechanisms of action for music therapy are not entirely clear. However, several theories have been proposed to explain its effects. For example, the arousal regulation theory posits that music can regulate the autonomic nervous system, which can have a positive effect on physiological and psychological states. Additionally, the neurocognitive theory suggests that music can activate multiple brain regions, leading to changes in cognitive function, memory, and emotional states. Furthermore, the social bonding theory suggests that music can promote social connections and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness among seniors with chronic diseases.

Despite the positive effects of music therapy on seniors' chronic diseases, some critiques of music therapy as a treatment for seniors' chronic diseases have been raised. For example, some researchers argue that the effects of music therapy may be overestimated due to publication bias and small sample sizes in some studies. Additionally, some critics argue that music therapy may not be effective for all seniors with chronic diseases, and that individual factors such as age, gender, and musical preferences may play a role in its effectiveness. Furthermore, some critics argue that music therapy may not be a cost-effective treatment option for seniors with chronic diseases.

Therefore, despite the potential benefits of music therapy for seniors, there are also several challenges that must be addressed. One challenge is the lack of standardized protocols for music therapy interventions, which can make it difficult to compare results across studies (Gómez-Romero 2020). Additionally, there is a need for more rigorous research to establish the effectiveness of music therapy for specific chronic conditions in seniors. Another challenge is the limited access to music therapy services, as well as the cost of such services, which may make it difficult for seniors to access this form of therapy (Cooke 2010). Moreover, several challenges exist in implementing this therapy. These challenges include the need for trained music therapists, lack of funding, and limited access to musical instruments and equipment. Seniors with hearing impairments or cognitive deficits may also face challenges in participating in music therapy sessions. Additionally, seniors with cultural or language barriers may have difficulty engaging in music therapy if the therapy does not incorporate their cultural or linguistic background.

5. Conclusion

Music therapy is a promising intervention for seniors with chronic diseases, as it has been shown to have positive effects on their quality of life, reduce symptoms, and enhance overall well-being. Music therapy has the potential to enhance the quality of life for seniors, providing them with a form of therapy that is both enjoyable and effective. By addressing the challenges that exist in implementing this therapy, we can ensure that seniors have access to the benefits of music therapy, leading to improved physical and mental health outcomes.

The mechanisms of action for music therapy are not entirely clear, but several theories have been proposed to explain its effects. Challenges exist in implementing this therapy, including the need for trained music therapists, lack of funding, and limited access to musical instruments and equipment. Addressing these challenges can improve access to music therapy for seniors and enhance their quality of life.

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