Music Therapy Research Bibliography for Older Adults

“Active music-making provides a form of therapy for the Alzheimer’s patient which may stimulate cognitive activities such that areas subject to progressive failure are maintained.”


Using Music Therapeutically with Older Adults: Music provides physical and emotional stimulation, facilitates social integration, provides communication, provides emotional expression, evokes associations, and provides diversion from inactivity, discomfort, and daily routine. Development of musical skills in healthy older adults may facilitate social integration, self-expression, structuring of time, and intellectual stimulation. Music is effective as a therapeutic medium because it is flexible, structured, occurs through time, and is an aesthetic experience.


Participation in organized music activities improves social interaction, well-being and a sense of accomplishment among community-dwelling senior adults.

“Findings of this study suggest that vocal instruction, inclusive of breathing exercises, may help to improve the quality of life for senior citizens with emphysema.”

Aging affects explicit but not implicit memory for melodic material.

A significant reduction in agitation was found during and following individualized music as compared to classical music.


Kim, S.J. (2005). The effects of music on pain perception of stroke patients during upper extremity joint exercises. *Journal of music therapy, 42*(1), 81-92. Positive affects and verbal responses were observed while performing upper extremity exercises with both music and karaoke accompaniment music.

Mercado, C., & Mercado, E. (2006). A program using environmental manipulation, music therapy activities, and the Somatron Vibroacoustic Chair to reduce agitation behaviors of nursing home residents with psychiatric disorders. *Music Therapy Perspectives, 24*(1), 30-38. Background music resulted in the significant reduction of accidents/incidents, PRN medication, STAT orders by physicians, and unplanned staff absences. Both music therapy sessions and Somatron sessions resulted in decreased agitation behaviors.


