



Northern Health Palliative Care

Music Therapy and Palliative Care

Collaborating to Enhance Care by Annette Rolleman MTA and Sandra Stanley RN PNC

How Does Music Therapy Work?

Music Therapy is the clinical, evidence based use of music by an accredited Music Therapist (MTA) to achieve non musical goals. Non musical goals fall under a number of categories to restore, support and sustain various levels of health: mental, physical, neurological, social and spiritual. Music and the therapeutic relationship are the basis by which the therapy takes place.

There are two possible directions for therapy. One is product oriented involving singing/listening, life review/legacy work or improvisation and songwriting. The other is process oriented work involving lyric analysis and self reflection, visualization, relaxation and guided imagery and music.

Where Can Music Therapy be Used?

Music therapy can occur wherever patients are located: hospitals, shelters, clinics, community/mental health, residential care, assisted living, hospices and the home.

Who Might Benefit from Music Therapy?

Patients for whom the palliative approach to care is being used as well as patients who are nearer to end of life.

What are the Benefits of Musical Therapy

- Depending on the goals of therapy chosen by the patient and therapist, the benefits range widely and can include the following:
- A reduction in severity of physical and psychological symptoms.
- Producing a legacy in song and stories on CD for loved ones which can be helpful in their grief work.

- An opportunity to deal with unresolved issues.
- Reminiscence can be used to help the patient adapt to change or stress and draw upon personal strengths.
- A creative outlet for processing and affirming emotions and may act as a way to help release and diffuse difficult emotions.
- By providing connection with family members when holding a group session for relaxation or visualization.
- A source of life validation and self-esteem.

Useful Tips From an MTA

- When using music, inquire about the patient's preference. Be sure the selections are client centered.
- iPods may be useful, but monitoring and moderation are recommended. Patients may need assistance with using the device: on/off, volume, changing songs. Dementia patients will require extra monitoring. Over usage may contribute to feelings of isolation.
- Use resources when and if available- contact a music therapist for consultation and referral.
- Practice self-care.

Resources for the Use of Music

- Link to NH recorded Music Therapy in Palliative Care [webinar](#)
- Music Therapy Association of BC www.mtabc.com
- Canadian Association for Music Therapy www.musictherapy.ca
- Music Heals www.musicheals.ca
- Music Interaction: Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care Alliance, Mary Lou Kelley 2013 www.palliativealliance.ca
- Vintage Radio Show App (free app)

More information and education on the NH Palliative Care Program can be found at www.northernhealth.ca; on OurNH > Clinical Programs and Services > Palliative Care or contact your local Palliative Care nurse Consultant.

References:

[Music Therapy and Palliative Care: Collaborating to Enhance Care](#). Webinar by Annette Rolleman MTA. 2017.