



Effects of Music Therapy for Patients with Dementia Depression and Agitation



Background

- Dementia has an unpredictable disease course, making day-to-day symptoms difficult to treat.
- With no definitive cure identified, personalized and scheduled music therapy should be explored as a non-pharmacological management option.¹

Purpose

- Music therapy is a valuable option for dementia patients, as the brain area responsible for processing music is one of the last to deteriorate in Alzheimer's.²
- This therapy can provide emotional and cognitive benefits even in the advanced stages of the disease.
- This research aims to determine the optimal combination and introduction of music therapy into patients' lives for maximum therapeutic benefit.

Design & Methods

Keywords:

Music Therapy, Dementia, Depression, Agitation, Quality of Life

Inclusion:

Patients with a formal dementia diagnosis, music therapy as a primary intervention, studies with comparison groups, studies published since 2018

Exclusion:

Patients in hospice care, studies without the full text available in English, studies with no comparison group, no music therapy used, and published earlier than 2018

Table 1: Summary of Evidence Search

Database	Yielded	Reviewed	Included in Analysis
Valpo Summon	953	10	2
Google Scholar	17,770	12	2
MedLine/EBESCO	54	6	1
Pubmed	348	9	1
Total:	19,125	37	6

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PICOT

In patients diagnosed with dementia, what is the effect of music therapy on depression and agitation compared to standard care within 1 year?

Table 2: Synthesis of Evidence

Type of Article	Number of Studies
Cluster – Randomized Controlled Trial	1
Systematic Review	2
Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	1
Feasibility Study	1
Single-Center Study	1

Tools of Measurement:

- Montgomery Asberg-Depression Scale
- Clinical Global Impression
- Pittsburgh Agitation Scale
- Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia

Results

- A combination of weekly interventions with sessions over 45 minutes shows the most effective frequency.³
- 1-4 months of therapy has also been shown to be more effective than 6 or more months.⁴
- Music therapy provided by a licensed professional showed no difference in response compared to sessions given by caregivers, students, etc.⁵
- Patients who took antipsychotic medication and received music therapy showed decreased agitation compared to those only taking medication.⁶
- Music released when the patient was 10-30 years old triggered the most autobiographical memories.⁴
- Some studies reported an increased burden on caregivers.⁷

Best Practice

Discussion:

- Music therapy should be considered when evaluating options for dementia treatment, whether first-line or adjunct management.
- This can also be a low-cost treatment done with family members
- Personalized playlists give patients a chance to input regarding their care

Limitations/Further study:

- Many studies that met the criteria were in multiple locations, creating varying outside factors that could have impacted the results.
- COVID also played a role in the number of patients able to participate in the studies

Conclusion

- Weekly interventions for a short course of months with a personalized playlist can provide patients with the optimal therapy duration and style
- Patients with dementia often have depressive symptoms due to being lonely. Reintroducing fond memories may reduce that sense of loneliness.
- Further research should include subtype dementia analysis and deeper investigation into short-term use in hospital and treatment facilities

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