Music Therapy in Pediatrics

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Abstract: Music has been utilized as a form of therapy due to ten factors; it has been particularly effective in treating children who are not adept at adaptively releasing their emotions, motivating children with little volition, in stimulating communication among children with undeveloped language skills, in helping to develop cognitive skills, and in overcoming abnormal habits or unadaptive behavior. Specific forms of therapy and techniques have been summarized and the focal points have been explained. There are mainly three categories of patients and music therapy has been applied in the treatment of children suffering from retardation and some form of emotional and behavioral polarization or abnormality, difficulty adapting due to physical functional disorders, and psychosomatic disorders stemming from psychological causes.

Key words: Music; Communication; Developmental disorders; Psychotherapy

Introduction

Music has been utilized as a form of therapy due to ten factors: 1. Music bypasses the intellectual process and directly affects the emotions. 2. Music produces a sense of self-satisfaction or self-love. 3. Music fulfills an aesthetic sense of beauty. 4. Music is liberating and provides a direct means of emotional release. 5. Music induces physical movement. 6. Music is a form of communication. 7. Music is structured according to set rules. 8. Music is diverse and has wide-ranging applications. 9. An integration of mental functions is needed to participate in music activities. 10. Collective music activities meet a social demand.

Additionally, in the field of pediatrics, music therapy is greatly beneficial as an enjoyable diversion and successfully provides distress-free treatment for children who feel threatened by the treatment. In addition to the ten factors listed above, music therapy has produced significant results in treating children who are not adept at adaptively releasing their emotions, in motivating children with little volition, in stimulating communication among children with poor or undeveloped language skills, in helping to develop cognitive skills by utilizing the fixed parameters in music, and in overcoming...
abnormal habits or unadaptive behavior.

Music, as is referred to in this paper, refers to all kinds of organized music and it is not restricted to the artistic or established forms of music.

Adaptation and Treatment Methods

Music therapy was initially used to treat adult patients suffering from mental illnesses, but its use was rapidly adopted in the field of pediatrics from the middle of the 20th century, principally, as a means of treating developmental disorders in children. As the pioneering nation in music therapy, the behavioral treatment approach (applied behavioristics method) was developed in the United States. Nordoff Robbins, who developed creative music therapy, adapted play therapy that emphasized improvisation and effectively utilized the characteristics of the music. His approach has greatly influenced music therapy in Japan.

Others such as the renown Montessori in the field of education for mentally retarded children, Carl Olaf in music education, and Darkrose, famous for rythmique, and other experts in educational therapy have established various schools of thought in music therapy, that has also influenced music therapy in Japan.

Music therapy has been widely applied in the treatment of children suffering from retardation and some form of emotional and behavioral polarization or abnormality, difficulty adapting due to physical functional disorders, and psychosomatic disorders stemming from psychological causes.

1. Retardation and emotional abnormalities impeding mental and physical development

Music therapy has been utilized to treat mental retardation, learning disabilities, developmental coordination disturbance, communication disorders, extensive developmental disorder, and others. Music activities that meet the needs and the development level of the patient are prepared and the aim is to help adjust the emotions and behavior by having the child listen to the music. The objective is to enable the autonomic nervous system to adjust and relax. Music activities are used at various stages to stimulate the development of movement, cognitive functions, communication skills, and others.

The skill to create as well as select music, that is in correlation with the level of physical and mental development and characteristics of the child, is vitally important, in addition to understanding the nature of the disorder and accurately assessing its progress. It is impossible for solely one therapist to develop and implement this type of therapy for a patient and a team approach or treatment which incorporates consultation is required.

The use of musical instruments is also an important means of therapy, but the approach differs from the concerns of music education, which addresses the issue of how to skillfully play existing musical instruments. In music therapy, the major objective is to select or create a musical instrument that is most suited to the physical and mental functions of the patient. The teaching aids created by Montessori or the musical instruments used by Carl Olaf have been traditionally exploited, but recently, musical instrument stores have begun to carry instruments or teaching aids that have been specifically developed for use in music therapy.

In either case, the key factors that produce successful results are the appropriate participation of the therapist and achieving goals such as stimulating the natural pace of physical and mental development by taking advantage of the patient’s interest, improving problematic behavior, and teaching daily living and communication skills.

When the disorder is relatively moderate and the possibility of a correlative relationship exists, music therapy has been used in small
repetition is used as part of the learning process to address a clearly defined problem. Incorporating music in both stages creates a calming effect which in turn, encourages the patient's participation in the activity that is being introduced. Additionally, the use of music makes it easier to structure the treatment and promotes the understanding of the autistic patient.

2. Behavioral polarization and abnormalities that impede adaptation

Repetitive behavioral disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or antisocial behavior, Tourette disorder, silence and eating disorders, and other repetitive abnormal habits are some of the disorders that fall into this category. Although the approach that is taken to treat these disorders differs slightly and the causes and psychological complications that stem from brain disorders are varied, music therapy is a commonly utilized approach, where a variety of music-related activities are selected to channel and adaptively release inherent aggression. The music activities are adjusted until adaptive behavior is attained.

The approach also differs according to the disorder and the personality of the patient. Music therapy has been successful in achieving relatively short-term behavioral changes in cases where psychological complications are a major factor.

3. Psychological factors as a primary cause of diverse psychosomatic disorders

A major goal of the treatment for psychosomatic disorders is to release psychological complications that stem from the disorder. Music therapy has been incorporated into play therapy and its related forms which are vitally important to help release the patient's pent up emotions and frustrations. Adaptive behavior is then taught through music activities, followed by attempts to verbalize the patient's inner self. Music therapy follows the same
process as the commonly utilized forms of psychological therapy.

**Conclusion**

The significance and effectiveness of music therapy in pediatrics have been explained in this paper. Music therapy takes advantage of the physical, psychological, and social impacts of music by using selected music-related activities in the treatment of children suffering from various disorders. Further, a summary of the major techniques and points, that is used to treat the three major areas of developmental and behavioral disorders and psychological complications, has been presented.

Due to the restricted length of the paper, evaluations were not discussed. But, the results that are achieved through therapy are closely examined using a behavioral evaluation scale and numerical values that are based on the direct observations and introspection of the therapist. It is hoped that music therapy will be utilized as an enjoyable form of therapy that provides gradual results, without inflicting fear or pain on the patient.

**REFERENCES**