

MUSIC THERAPY IN ONCOLOGY: INTERVENTION MODALITIES AND PATIENT LIVED EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

Music therapy is a therapeutic approach that utilizes music and sound to maintain, enhance, or contribute to restoring the mental and physical health of an individual. Emerging as a promising adjunctive intervention in the comprehensive care of cancer patients, music therapy holds potential to significantly impact patients' well-being.

In oncology, music therapy is still underdeveloped. Nevertheless, this practice can contribute to improving patients' **quality of life**: music therapy sessions can help patients reduce anxiety, accompany them in managing pain, or create a conducive space for the unique expression of the patient and their emotions.

Methods

Music therapy sessions were offered to patients in two modalities:

- for patients in the waiting rooms of the chemotherapy day hospital, group receptive music therapy sessions were conducted with the aim of reducing patients' anxiety levels.
- for patients in their hospital rooms during traditional hospitalization, each care plan was developed following a discussion with the healthcare team. Specific therapeutic objectives were identified, and a personalized care program was created. Individual music therapy sessions were conducted using different protocols tailored to each patient's needs, including active music therapy or receptive music therapy, which may include a music relaxation protocol.

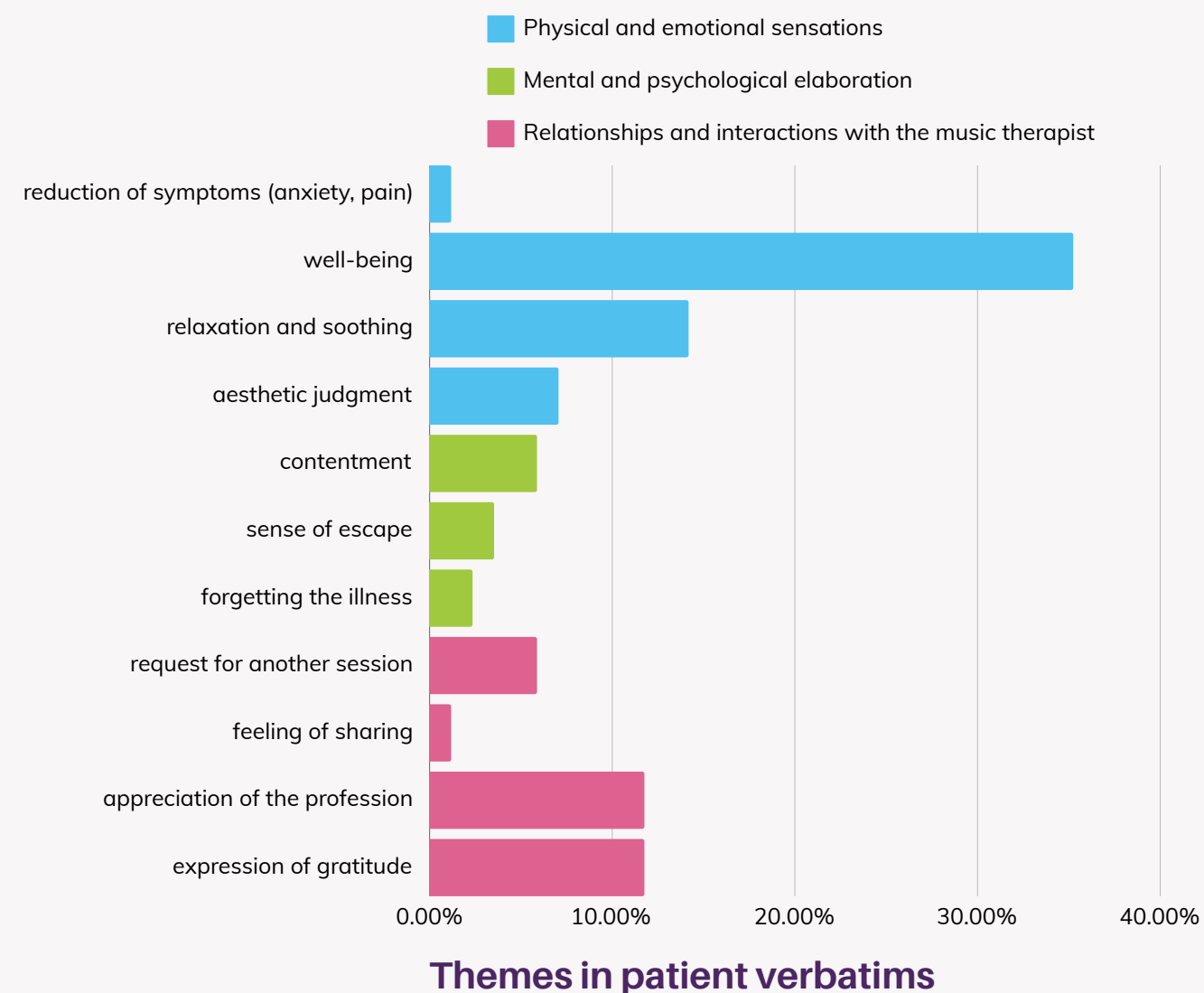
In order to evaluate the benefits of music therapy sessions, we employed symptom scales before and after each session. These assessments included **numeric visual scales for pain and anxiety**, as well as **verbatim** reports derived from patients' spontaneous expressions.

Results

From October 2022 to May 2023, 128 music therapy sessions were conducted, involving 141 patients. Among them, 42% were in traditional hospitalization, and 58% were in chemotherapy day hospital. The average duration of a session was 34 minutes.

Quantitative evaluation of symptom improvement proved challenging for various reasons (such as open group settings in the chemotherapy day hospital, or due to relaxation achieved after receptive music therapy sessions, occasionally leading to patient drowsiness). These challenges highlighted the importance of recording verbatims as qualitative evaluations, representing the patients' own words expressed spontaneously.

Regarding the verbatims, several themes emerged:



Discussion

All patients expressed satisfaction, and no disadvantages were reported regarding this non-invasive approach.

While the analysis of verbatims reveals limited discussion among patients regarding the evolution of symptoms related to the therapeutic indication (the first theme in the chart), they expressed a diverse array of benefits associated with the music therapy sessions, indicating **numerous patient-specific advantages**.

The initial therapeutic objectives of music therapy sessions can thus be evaluated through the analysis of verbatims, providing a more comprehensive assessment beyond solely relying on numeric visual scales of anxiety or pain. It is evident that testimonials offer insight into each patient's **unique experience** with this mode of care.

Conclusions

Music therapy improves the quality of life for cancer patients (Bradt et al., 2021; Rossetti et al., 2017). However, rigorous studies in this area are still limited and warrant further exploration. To assess the benefits of music therapy, which is still relatively underdeveloped in hospital settings, additional rigorous studies are essential.

Our work highlights that **verbatim can serve as evaluation modalities**, reflecting the perceived benefits after sessions.

References

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- Rossetti A, Chadha M, Torres BN, Lee JK, Hylton D, Loewy JV, et al. The impact of music therapy on anxiety in cancer patients undergoing simulation for radiation therapy. *Int J Radiat Oncol Biol Phys.* 2017;99(1):103-10. doi: 10.1016/j.ijrobp.2017.05.003