

# MUSIC THERAPY IN ONCOLOGY: AN INNOVATIVE PRACTICE TO SUPPORT THE CAREGIVER/PATIENT PAIR DURING INVASIVE TREATMENTS

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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. This practice can be useful in **supporting the caregiver/patient pair** during the **invasive procedures** necessary for cancer patients (lumbar puncture, nasogastric tube insertion, Qutenza patch application, etc.). Indeed, during invasive treatments, patient may manifest pain and/or anxiety, while the caregiver may also experience anxiety when performing these procedures.

A clinical case will illustrate our work: Mrs. E and the dressing changes for her pressure ulcers.

## Methods

The protocol of **musical relaxation** is particularly employed for patients experiencing pain during invasive treatments. It is pragmatic as it is tailored for urgent scenarios, requiring minimal preparation from the music therapist and omitting the necessity for prior patient consultation. The theoretical principle is to **divert the patient's attention from their perception of pain** and to **reduce their physical and psychological tensions**. An effect is also expected for the nurses performing the care (reduction of their anxiety).

Kigonki



## Methods

The choice of the Kigonki instrument is attributed to its neutral tones, particularly long frequencies, and strong resonance. The protocol is as follows: the music therapist adjusts their instrumental playing to align with the patient's level of alertness at the beginning of the session, particularly monitoring the patient's respiratory rhythm. The tempo of the instrumental playing is gradually reduced to induce a state of relaxation. After a few minutes, the time is then appropriate for the nurses to begin their care. The relaxation phase is sustained throughout and after the care. Frequently, the music therapist observes the patient either falling asleep or achieving a profound sense of calmness and exits the room quietly.

It is crucial for the music therapist to be present in order to modify the parameters of their instrumental playing if the patient experiences acute pain during the procedure.

Patient evaluation is conducted using a **0 to 10 numeric visual scale** to assess symptoms of anxiety and/or pain before and after the session. Additionally, the caregiver is asked to evaluate the intervention's benefits, particularly its impact on their anxiety levels and the invasive care they have performed. Complementary qualitative insights enhance this quantitative assessment: **verbatim** accounts from both the patient and caregiver are recorded.

## Results

Quantitative evaluations are not actionable, as the patient either falls asleep or becomes deeply relaxed at the end of the session. Verbatim accounts can be collected after the session or on another day: the following day, Mrs. E **expresses gratitude and states that the session 'helped her'**. Both nurses report a **decrease of 3 and 4 points** respectively on the numeric visual scale for **anxiety**. They both assess that **music therapy assisted them in performing their care (10/10)** and also **aided the patient during the care (10/10)**. They comment on the 'pleasant care experience for both patient and caregiver' and express 'thank you on behalf of the patient'. No negative impact is observed or reported.

## Discussion

We can observe that **timing is a critical factor** in the accompaniment of an invasive procedure by a professional music therapist. Therefore, **coordination** with healthcare teams appears paramount to anticipate the onset of the music therapy session.

Furthermore, we note that evaluations can be enhanced: firstly, by introducing an assessment of pain perception at a distance from the intervention to measure its effects over time; secondly, by monitoring the patient's heart rate before, during, and after the invasive procedure.

The **evaluation methods thus remain to be further refined** to develop rigorous studies and demonstrate that music therapy can be a particularly effective adjunctive treatment during invasive procedures.

## Conclusions

Music therapy improves the quality of life for cancer patients (Bradt et al., 2021; Rossetti et al., 2017). Additionally, healthcare professionals often experience work-related distress. Therefore, the music therapist can play a **dual role**: providing support to patients as well as to caregivers, thus participating in a **collective caregiving dynamic**. His integration into oncology center healthcare is fundamental, as it enables him to **enhance patient care** and **elevate the quality of work life for healthcare professionals**.

## References

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