

Music at McKee: A Research-Based Therapy for Meeting Patient Needs

By Kimberly Sena Moore, MM, NMT, MT-BC

Music affects us. We may cry when listening to music, hum a song only to realize that we are walking to the beat, or are reminded of graduation when we hear *Pomp and Circumstance*. It naturally engages the emotional, physiological, cognitive, speech and sensorimotor systems in our brain. Board-certified music therapists are trained to use this ability to effect therapeutic change.

Music Therapy at McKee Medical Center

Music and art therapy began at McKee Medical Center when the Expressive Arts Therapy program was established in Fall 2006. Although initially intended for oncology patients, the program was expanded due to overwhelming demand. Currently, the music therapy program includes individual or family bedside sessions on multiple inpatient units, a weekly music and exercise group (co-facilitated with an OT and PT), and staff support services, including a future Monthly Community Drum Circle.

About Music Therapy

Simply put, music therapists utilize instrumental and vocal exercises to target functional non-musical needs. They use a similar treatment process as other related professionals: assessment, goal-setting, treatment, and evaluation. Music therapists work with a variety of clients (e.g. medical patients, children with autism, stroke victims, adults with dementia, and emotionally-disturbed youth) in individual, family, or group settings. The MT-BC (Music Therapist-Board Certified), an indication of professional competence, is earned following completion of college coursework and a six-month clinical training internship.

Music in Medicine

The earliest recorded references to music therapy surfaced in the United States in the late 1700s and involved using music to heal and cure various ailments. Modern music therapy has been supported through extensive research, which shows that in a medical setting, music can:

- Decrease pain perception and reduce anxiety and nausea¹⁻⁵

- Facilitate motor rehabilitation⁶⁻¹³

- Provide emotional support¹⁴⁻¹⁸

- Enhance neuroimmune function¹⁹⁻²¹

- Increase sense of control and improve quality of life²²⁻²⁵



At McKee Medical Center, self-reported measures of pain and anxiety were reduced by 39% (N=38) and 53% (N=24), respectively. Self-reported measures of contentment increased by 26% (N=20) following music therapy treatment.

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