



Music interventions may benefit cancer patients

Clinical question

How effective is music therapy or other music interventions in patients with cancer?

Bottom line

Music interventions may have beneficial effects on anxiety, pain, mood, and quality of life in people with cancer. Furthermore, music may have a small effect on heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure. No evidence of a difference between music therapy or music medicine (listening to pre-recorded music offered by a medical professional) and control was found for depression, fatigue or physical status. However, only a small number of trials investigated the effect of music on these outcomes.

Caveat

Most trials were at high risk of bias and therefore these results need to be interpreted with caution. It was not possible to draw any conclusions about the effect of music interventions on distress, body image, oxygen saturation level, immunologic functioning, spirituality, and communication outcomes because there were not enough trials looking at these aspects. The limited number of trials in this review prevented a comparison being made between music therapy and music medicine interventions.

Context

In music medicine interventions, the patient listens to pre-recorded music that is offered by a medical professional. Music therapy requires the implementation of a music intervention by a trained music therapist, the presence of a therapeutic process, and the use of personally tailored music experiences.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Bradt J, et al. Music interventions for improving psychological and physical outcomes in cancer patients. *Cochrane Reviews*, 2011, Issue 8. Article No. CD006911. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006911.pub2.

This review contains 30 studies involving 1891 participants.

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