



Music Therapy in Healthcare

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“If we consider our human biology in terms of musical form rather than mechanical construction and our response to biological challenges as a repertoire of improvisations, we may find that disease restricts our ability to improvise new solutions to challenges—in musical terms, restricts our ability to play improvised music” (Aldridge, 1993). Music therapy is swiftly becoming a major component to the healthcare field. Music therapists have the ability to work in a variety of settings from a neonatal intensive care unit to geriatric facilities to psychiatric wards and everywhere in between.

“Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program” (American Music Therapy Association definition, 2005).

Music therapy is a research-based practice that provides the healthcare industry with research that is both qualitative and quantitative. The use of music in the medical setting dates back to the writings of Aristotle and Plato. Music therapy began being noted in the healthcare field during World War I and World War II as music therapists began working with veterans. The emotional and physical benefits that veterans experienced led to physicians beginning to hire music therapists as a part of the medical team.

Today more and more hospitals are beginning to hire music therapists to approach many different issues of their patients. “Music is used in general hospitals to: alleviate pain in conjunction with anesthesia or pain medication; elevate patients’ mood and counteract depression; promote movement for physical rehabilitation; calm or sedate, often to induce sleep; counteract apprehension or fear; and lessen muscle tension for the purpose of relaxation, including the autonomic nervous system” (www.musictherapy.org, 2007).

Music therapy can address a patient’s fear, anxiety, pain, rehabilitation issues, and much more. As the world watches the field of music therapy grow, the healthcare industry will be a big part of that growth.

The education to becoming a music therapist involves a myriad of training. A music therapist must obtain a bachelors degree from a school with an approved music therapy program. While taking courses a music therapist must take many classes in music, psychology, biology, human development, and many more. After completing the coursework, a music therapist then must complete a six-month internship at an approved internship site. After completing all the educational requirements, the music therapy candidate is then eligible to sit for the music therapy boards administered by the Certification Board for Music Therapists. There are also masters and PhD programs in music therapy.

For more information on music therapy go to: www.musictherapy.org

References

Music therapy makes a difference. Retrieved January 6, 2007.
<http://www.musictherapy.org>.

Aldridge, D. The music of the body: Music therapy in medical settings. The Journal of Mind-Body Health. 9(1), 17-35