

Music Therapy: A Pathway to Enhance Wellness

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Abstract – India is one of the countries that takes pride in its rich and unique cultural heritage and traditions. The country has indigenous traditional healing systems like Yoga and Ayurveda, their recognition can be ascertained from the fact that western countries have also accepted these India gifts, furthermore, these have also been scientifically endorsed for their effectiveness in curing certain ailments. Music therapy is the latest to join the spectrum of Indian traditional system of healthcare and healing.

Key Words - Music Therapy, Wellness, Yoga, Health and Wellness

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INTRODUCTION

Wellness can be defined as a condition of well-being of an individual that is oriented toward maximizing an individual's all round potential. It is this condition of well-being of the populace of a country, that is one of the key factors those are instrumental for a country's social and economic development. Numerous studies carried out by global visionaries, eminent economists and public health experts at global organizations have echoed the above stated observation.

MUSIC THERAPY: A COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

Music, that is primarily a mode of entertainment, has been accorded a new perspective in enhancing the wellness of human beings. A link between aesthetic expression and psychological well-being was established where artistic ability was used to interpret the unconscious mind and the moral management that focused on wide ranging methods of treatment focusing on the patient's social, individual needs. It was from here the journey of music spread as a therapeutic tool. Besides the traditional medicine like yoga, acupressure, acupuncture etc., music too has now joined the bandwagon of complementary medicine, and all these modalities of complementary medicine are gradually gaining grounds, as people have started acknowledging their effectiveness. Music therapy has found numerous applications in the developed world but it is yet to experience a widespread adoption in India. The observations get corroborated as a fact when one attempts to look for peer-reviewed literature on music therapy from an Indian perspective. It is highly challenging to find peer reviewed literature reported by Indian researchers and practitioners into music therapy. This paper aims to bridge this gap by presenting current status of

upcoming modality of complementary medicine that aids the wellness of body, mind and spirit not only of young people but also of elderly. The author tries to highlight, discuss and educate people from all walks of life about the role of music in promoting health and well-being through music therapy and programs being run in India.

ROLE OF MUSIC IN HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Music can be the best described as a medium through which a creator projects his/her feelings, ideas and deeper psychological necessities, making it inseparable from the human psyche. It is a creative process and the very essence of creativity begins nowhere else but, in the mind of the person being influenced by deep psychological process. Everyone may be knowing, what is music, but not many would be able to express it clearly. 'The organized sound which gives pleasure is music'. Composers have presented ten different versions of music: 1. Music is organized sound. 2. Music is a form of magic ritual. 3. Music is a science. 4. Music is a language. 5. Music is an activity. 6. Music is symbolic representation of sound. 7. Music is a literature. 8. Music is an industry. 9. Music is an entertainment medium. 10. Music is an art. Every culture, society, country has numerous forms of music to cater various moods and expressions.

It is claimed that basic mantra 'Om' in the Hindu religion known as a 'Pranav Mantra', that is the source of all mantras, sends some special mechanical vibrations up our spine that help us to feel relaxed and energized. Indians feel that if an individual is attuned to nature, he/she can observe music in the soft murmur of a brook, the startling rumble of thunder, the gentle melody of a passing breeze and even in the mighty roar of the crashing

waves. Music's benefits with respect to wellness have been claimed in the field of medicine as well. Widespread uses of music as medicine followed by encouraging result have lead to the formation of a new stream of complementary medicine called 'Music Therapy'. There are numerous definitions of music therapy which have been laid by various researchers, practitioners, professional associations and societies. Each of the definitions have been put forward from a specific context and perspectives. One of the most popular definitions of music therapy-"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".

Prime goals of music therapy have been claimed to be as:

1. Physical goals (such as improving motor functions, muscle control, balance, coordination or eye and hand, improving speech skills).
2. Cognitive goals (memory, improved communication, impulse control, alertness).
3. Psychological goals (improved emotional awareness, problem solving skills, reduction in stress, sense of accomplishment and promoting spiritual exploration).
4. Social goals (establishing relationships, peer interaction, eye contact, increasing social involvement).

"Music reduces staff tension in the operating room and also helps to relax the patient." Nash is one of the many physicians who are finding that music used with conventional therapies can help heal the sick. Lee says, "We have seen confirmation of music's benefits in helping to avoid serious complications during illness, enhancing patient's well-being and shortening hospital stays." Some studies show music can lower blood pressure, basal-metabolism and respiration rates, thus lessening physiological responses to stress. Music therapy is proving especially effective in three key medical areas:

1. Pain, anxiety and depression.
2. Mental, emotional and physical handicaps.
3. Neurological disorders.

The diverse range of applications is indicative of the potential that music holds. World over, practitioners in many countries (developed and developing) have started using music therapy for improving quality of life of the populace. India has also gradually opened upto this therapeutic modality that is centered around Indian classical music.

MUSIC THERAPY FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

In recent years, particularly after the world war II, the discipline of music therapy has attracted the attention of not only singers, musicians and musicologists, but also scientists from various formations such as psychology, neurology, biology etc and as a result music therapy is tried as a complementary medicine for patients suffering from diverse psychological problems such as anxiety, dementia, dyslexia, autism, retardation. It is prescribed as a preventive therapy not only for infants, children, teenagers, middle-aged workers and executive but for the elderly too. In short people suffering or prone to psychic disturbances are flooded with music that may help either in preventing or overcoming such disturbances addressed by appropriate music notes.

Researchers have found that people in old age are quite interested in music, although many of them have weakened hearing or other old-age problems. Through music, there is possibility to arrive at one's pleasure-giving memories and fulfilling experiences connected to one's earlier life-events. As the social relations decrease due to ageing, it becomes all the more necessary to adopt music as a companion. Music can express personal experiences which cannot be expressed verbally. It can even revive suppressed sides of life, rejuvenating the ageing mindscape. Normally in the treatment of healthy old people group-singing and group-listening are encouraged. In some cases group music therapy reduces depression in persons with dementia. Slight improvement in depression occurs immediately after music therapy. The group music intervention is a noninvasive and inexpensive therapy that appears to reduce elders' depression. It also delays the deterioration of cognitive functions, particularly short-term recall function. Group music therapy may be an appropriate intervention among elderly persons with mild and moderate dementia.

Issues of self-awareness and communication become increasingly important to the elderly, whose skills are declining and for whom isolation is increasing. Loss, illness, depression, and the need to restore faith and hope are readily addressed through therapy in music and art. When provided by a trained music therapist, music has been proven effective in stimulating memory recall which contributes to reminiscence and satisfaction with life, positive changes in mood and emotional states, a sense of control over life through successful experiences, anxiety and stress reduction, and pain and discomfort management. It promotes rhythmic and continuous physical movement and vocal fluency as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and offers opportunities to interact socially with others

MUSIC THERAPY IN INDIA: A FLEDGLING STREAM

India is one of the countries that take pride in its rich and unique cultural heritage and traditions.

The country has indigenous traditional healing systems like Yoga and Ayurveda, their recognition can be ascertained from the fact that western countries have also accepted these India gifts, furthermore, these have also been scientifically endorsed for their effectiveness in curing certain ailments. Music therapy is the latest to join the spectrum of Indian traditional system of healthcare and healing.

Numerous practitioners have claimed that music therapy has its roots in this universe, right from the dawn of civilizations. Dr. Mythily Thirumalchari – a noted Indian Music therapist and a researcher in Music therapy, claims “since our music is universal and has authenticity in this refined field, we can claim this form of seeking solace belongs to us. It can be said that the practice of music therapy has promising future in India, the following instances of medical therapy are indicative of the level of adoption of music therapy in India. Indian music therapy is an integration of ancient healing practices like Vedic traditions, Nada yoga (yoga of music), Nadopasna, Raga Chikitsa (using ragas) and musical traditions coupled with enhancements and adaptations with respect to the traditional medical practice and knowledge. In India music therapists have reported to be treating ailments such as psychological disorders, hypertension, asthma and gynecological problems. The practitioners have also concluded that Indian classical music can also be used to overcome psychological stress and anxiety threshold. Few institutions like Nada Centre (Chennai), Rag Anusandhan Kendra (Chennai) and Shakti Vikas Prkalp (New Delhi) are some of the pioneering institutions those have long term objectives with respect to music therapy.

CONCLUSION

Music Therapy in India is based on well-practiced and tested system but not proven to the extent.

The domain has been researched and published in the Western world. Indian culture and heritage that poses strong belief in religious and other alternative therapies including complimentary medicine is expected to give a boost to music therapy in India. The major boost to private healthcare service sector that provides the majority of the healthcare services in India, too has opened up to music therapy. As a result few leading private hospital groups in the healthcare services sector have already set up Department of Music Therapy. So far whatever has been achieved it is purely because of some forward looking music therapists and institutions. It may be too early to comment on the rate and extent of adoption that music

therapy may achieve in India. The present Indian scenario with respect to music therapy is relatively encouraging in South India for the fact that few institutions including hospitals in South India have taken a lead in this field. The situation now calls for stepping up the research in this field and this could be initiated by preparing a research agenda and a roadmap for encouraging the practice of music therapy in India especially for elderly. It is expected that this study will help new entrants into music therapy to have an idea about the present status and the gaps those exist viz-a-viz music therapy in India.

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