

New paper provides insights for music therapy in surgical area

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Music therapists at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center lowered anxiety among patients undergoing breast biopsies. Credit: University Hospitals, Cleveland.

A new paper published in the September 2016 issue of the *AORN Journal* provides insights into the impact of implementing a music therapy program for surgical patients.

The paper, written by two music therapists and a nurse anesthetist at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center, is based on what they learned while conducting a two-year randomized study to learn the effect of live and recorded music on the anxiety of 207 women undergoing a biopsy for breast cancer diagnosis and treatment.

The authors collaborated to introduce music therapy practices into the surgical area. In the study, they randomized patients into a control group (no music), a live music group, or a recorded music group. Due to limited time before surgery, the researchers presented patients in the experimental groups with a live song performed by a music therapist at bedside or a recorded song played on an iPod through earphones.

When self-rating their anxiety using a visual scale ranging from "not at all anxious" to "highly

anxious," participants in both live and recorded-music groups experienced a significant reduction in pre-operative anxiety of 42.5 percent and 41.2 percent, respectively, when compared to the control group.

"During our two-year trial, we gained information on potential benefits, challenges and methods of facilitating a surgical music therapy program," said lead author Jaclyn Bradley Palmer, a board-certified music therapist at UH Seidman Cancer Center. "In addition, we learned approaches to integrating the program with perioperative nursing staff members."

Palmer said that a music therapist may be highly beneficial in the surgical setting, and music therapy may be a means of enhancing the quality of patient care in collaboration with perioperative nurses.

"As an interdisciplinary surgical staff member, the music therapist may help nurses achieve patient-related goals of anxiety reduction, pain management, effective education and satisfaction," said Palmer. "And by having professional music therapists facilitate surgical [music](#) therapy programs, nursing workloads also may be reduced."

She said additional research should continue to study if [music therapy](#) programs in the surgical area have a positive effect on patients.

More information: Jaclyn Bradley Palmer et al. Collaborating With Music Therapists to Improve Patient Care, *AORN Journal* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.aorn.2016.06.014](#)

Provided by University Hospitals Case Medical Center

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