

## Music Therapy in the Ward Project for children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is the most common type of leukemia in children. With the rapid development of morphology, immunology, cyto-genetics, molecular biology, and treatment methods, the survive rate was significantly improved. However, children from 3 to 15 with leukemia are confronted with uncommon life events, somatic discomfort, negative emotion, family problems and unfamiliar environment, which will affect their physician, cognition, personality and sociability throughout their life.

Initial hospitalization and treatment can be nervous, anxious, fear and confused, particularly during the operations such as lumbar puncture, the bone marrow puncture and chemotherapy. The physical pain and psychological pressure from the treatment and chemotherapy drugs may result in children's negative coping strategies. This may also increase the difficulties when treatment team provides medical service and nursing.

With the challenges in medical treatment, more and more doctors and nurses focus on children's psychological status and their quality of life. Music therapy, as a form of creative and professional complementary method, has been widely employed globally in pediatric oncology.

The goals of music therapy are multiple. Clark, Siden & Straatman (2014) conclude the goals through music therapy, include pain management and sensory stimulation; social interaction; emotion, behavior and coping skills; and identity, self-expression, self-esteem and spiritual legacy.

With this particular population, music therapy needs to be flexible according to their condition, energy and needs (Dun, 2013). Several studies have explored the application of interactive music therapy method in this area, including receptive music therapy method, re-creative music therapy method, improvisation and song writing. Researchers find out that interactive music therapy method can 1) reduce children's anxiety and increase their comfort level during hospitalization (Barrera, Rykov & Doyle, 2002); 2) offer more choices, increase the sense of control and the opportunity of interacting with others (Robb, et al., 2008); 3) express their feeling and thoughts freely through improvisation and songwriting, especially for the adolescents (Stecher, et al., 1972).

In China, some allied health members have realized the importance of hospitalized children's psychological status. However, the intensive mission keeps them away from fulfilling this part. Multidisciplinary model then is gradually formed. Team members in this model are not only considering the medical treatment method, but also providing the physical, psychological, social and spiritual assistance for children even their family (Twyford, 2008).

The pediatrics department of the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University is the first organization in Guangzhou to establish the music therapy project for children with ALL. The *Music Therapy in the Ward Project* has a

multidisciplinary team including doctors, nurses, caregivers, music therapists and volunteers. Referrals for music therapy usually come from doctors, nurses and caregivers. Assessment of hospitalized children with ALL can help music therapists identify their needs. Interactive music therapy method is employed in group or individual session, to reduce the pain from ALL and medical treatment, decrease the anxiety and stress from the unfamiliar environment and the treatment process, improve mood, increase the interaction between children and the medical team, family caregivers and other hospitalized children, so as to improve their quality of life and better cooperation with the medical team.

*Music therapy in the ward* is an innovative project for hospitalized children with ALL. It is rather new for the medical team, family caregivers and the children. In their point of view, music therapy session is still considered as music lesson. In addition, venue, funding and other external factors limit the further development and study of the project. The unsustainability of the project is also another factor that affects the therapeutic outcome. Further study may suggest the focus on cooperation between music therapy and medical operation of ALL.