

## Family-centred Music Therapy with preterm babies and their parents in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Colombia

### Abstract

This presentation discusses the experiences and challenges of implementing a new music therapy service in a NICU in Colombia. It addresses the cultural and structural realities when building up such a service and outlines the main pillars of clinical practice and the results of a research study in this NICU.

### Paper

Preterm birth is a main cause of neonatal death, perinatal mortality and long-term morbidity (Berghella, 2010). The required hospitalization in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) can be a very stressful life event for both the preterm babies and their parents. Music therapy is known to be beneficial for fostering the self-regulation and development of preterm babies in the NICU and can help parents to reduce their stress, anxiety and improve their wellbeing (Ettenberger et al., 2014; Loewy et al. 2013; Teckenberg-Jansson, 2011).

In Colombia, South America, music therapy is an emerging profession and not a commonly used treatment in medical settings or hospitals. This presentation discusses the experiences and challenges of building-up and implementing the first music therapy service in a NICU in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. A focus of this paper will lie upon stressing the need to consider the cultural and structural realities when implementing such a service in a new country and culture. Family structures, social relationships, communication and of course the music and *musicking* are all culturally-shaped aspects that influence how research and clinical practice of music therapy in the NICU can be done, developed and understood. Hereby, the main pillars of clinical practice and its family-centred approach will be outlined. The data of two mixed-methods research studies (Ettenberger, in press; Ettenberger et al., 2014) conducted in this NICU will be used to underline the importance of integrating theory, research and clinical practice in the NICU.

There is a mayor gap in addressing and making transparent the cultural and structural realities when discussing music therapy in the NICU. However, these realities can have a major influence on both research and clinical practice and should be considered when setting up a new service.

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**Keywords**

Music therapy, NICU, culture, family-centred care, Colombia

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