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Music Therapy and Schizophrenia

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The more there is an increasing interest in music therapy with psychiatric patients, the more there are needs and demands for the evidence which proves the clinical effectiveness of music.

Amongst many research articles about music therapy for schizophrenia, Gold et al. (2005) have found four reports which have successfully met requirements of randomized control trial (RCT) and have given a systematic investigation. According to their Cochrane Review conclusion, “when added to standard care, music therapy helps people with schizophrenia improve their global state, mental state and social functioning”.

On the other hand, Ansdell & Meehan (2010) emphasizes the importance of service-users’ “narratives”, in order to understand the effectiveness of music therapy, and he had analyzed the narratives of 19 difficult psychotic patients. He states in this research that “they do not necessarily experience (and value) such a therapy in the way therapists, referring clinicians, and researchers defining ‘out-comes’ and ‘effectiveness’”, “across the range of benefits reported through users’ narratives, most were instead related to broader quality of life, relational, or existential dimensions of experience”. And he came to term with the notion of “Users’ Evidence”, which provides the “Evidence by/for the Service-users”. Therefore clinical evidence should not only be defined as scientific figures extracted from the statistics measurement, but also from the real experiences and vivid phenomena within the patients.

In this presentation, I will demonstrate one of my patients who had disorganized schizophrenia (hebephrenia). He had weekly music therapy session where a piano duo improvisation took place. And during and after the session, this patient wrote something on a piece of paper and gave it to me. His spoken and written words exactly conveyed the real sense and meaning

of “beauty”, ”pleasure” and “happiness”, the core moments of music therapy practice, in his musical experience. And these “narratives” also support Ansdell’s theory.

In this case illustration, I will also discuss the meanings of music therapy for this population from the psychopathological viewpoints. I am sure that deep, thorough investigation of an each case study, which itself becomes an evidence, will disclose the essence of this work and it will fortify the clinical effectiveness in the future work.

References

- 1) Gold,C, Haldal,T.O., Dahle,T., Wigram ,T. : Music therapy for schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses (Review). The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD004025.pub2.
- 2) Ansdell,G. & Meehan,J.: “Some Light at the End of the Tunnel”: Exploring Users’ Evidence for the Effectiveness of Music Therapy in Adult Mental Health Settings. Music and Medicine 2(1): 29-40, 2010.

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