

Title: “Music Therapy in Cancer Care: A case study”

Presenter: Dawn McDougal Miller, MME, MT-BC

Affiliation: Park Nicollet Health Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

This presentation will highlight a case study which will be published in the recent special edition of the IAMM Music and Medicine Journal. It describes the healing journey through music therapy of “Rebecca,” a woman with breast cancer. The topics of “healing versus curing” and healing of medical trauma theories will be discussed. Rebecca’s music therapy sessions were a catalyst within her multidimensional healing process, which impacted her on mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and relational levels.

Rebecca had five series of music therapy sessions over a nine year period throughout the trajectory of her cancer, from diagnosis until her death. The following methods and techniques were included within the 35 music therapy sessions: Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM), various levels of supportive and re-educative music and imagery, directed imaging, music assisted relaxation, and improvisation.

Music therapy sessions enhanced symptom management of fatigue, pain, anxiety, panic attacks, and needle phobia, and examples will be shared during the presentation. Rebecca’s family members were involved in some of the sessions, including a significant co-imaging Bonny Method of Guided Imagery session with her sister, which brought about core level healing of Rebecca’s needle phobia.

Rebecca’s music therapy sessions allowed her to traverse the ever shifting cancer treatment paradigms from:

- 1) aggressive treatment to cure her cancer;
- 2) maintenance treatment to help her live well with cancer;
- 3) palliative care to help her manage every increasing pain and symptoms;
- 4) hospice care to support Rebecca and her family in her dying process.

Although Rebecca was not cured of her cancer, she and her family felt that she was healed on many levels.