

Effect of Music Therapy on Stress: Is it Really Effective?

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Stress is a common concern in healthcare personnel such as dentists because it may affect their clinical practice and performance (Polychronopoulou & Divaris, 2005; Pozos Radillo et al., 2008). The effect of music on stress has been known to philosophers and thinkers such as Aristotle from ancient times; however, its psychological effects on modern day medicine were first proposed by Sigmund Freud. Music therapy helps to treat stress in a variety of ways; namely it can improve mood, vitality, self-esteem and personality. Additionally, studies have shown that when people are deeply involved in activities that are fun, physiological factors such as heart rate (HR), blood pressure (BP) and respiration rate are decreased (Polychronopoulou & Divaris, 2005).

Factors such as the type of musical activity, time allocated to it and ancillary activities such as exercise are all factors shown to be effective in lowering the level of stress (Polychronopoulou & Divaris, 2005). Attention to music may also provide peace of mind and this may play a role in clinical practice (Pozos Radillo, Tórréz López, Aguilera Velasco et al., 2008). Blanca assessed factors causing stress in dentists and found that stress in women was three times higher than men and 13.7% of dentists had high levels of stress, 71% had intermediate levels of stress and 14% had low levels of stress (Pozos Radillo, Tórréz López, Aguilera Velasco et al., 2008). A study by Makam showed that 97.5% considered "low tone music" to be relaxing (Makama, Ameh, & Eguma, 2010). Zeyad stated that stress management should be incorporated into dental education to ensure the mental health of dentists (Al-Sowygh, 2013). Studies show that dentists are prone to professional burnout, as stress may lead to anxiety and depression, owing to the nature of this discipline in clinical practice. Treatment modalities and prevention strategies can help dentists overcome or prevent these symptoms (Al-Sowygh, 2013; Rada & Johnson-Leong, 2004). There are few studies on the impact of music on stress, anxiety and depression in physicians and dentists.

To this end, we recently undertook a retrospective study to assess the effect of soft music (classical music' solo piano or instrumental) in reducing stress, anxiety and depression in 80 practicing dentists.

Those with a history of anxiety, depression in the family, tragedy (divorce, recent death of relatives etc.) were excluded. Those who had had music incorporated in their practice for at least a year were assessed and compared with those who had not. Both case (n = 40) and controls (n = 40) were assessed using the DASS-42 questionnaire and the data were analyzed via Mann-Whitney-U test and Chi-square test. It was interesting that significantly more stress ($p < 0.009$), anxiety ($p < 0.006$) and depression ($p < 0.009$) was noted in the control group while no relationship was found between demographic variables.

In conclusion, our study findings showed that in our clinical setting, dentists who had relaxing music incorporated in their practice had significantly lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression regardless of age, sex, type of practice, years of practice or other demographic variables. Relaxing music played an essential role in alleviation of stress in practicing dentists. Integrating music in clinical practice may be important to maintaining mental health. Further studies to assess different genera of music on stress, anxiety and depression in dentists are warranted.

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