
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Music & Wellbeing

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Introduction: Scientific literature suggests that music may serve as therapeutic function among populations with different illnesses or disorders. Functional neuroimaging studies that incorporate music activity or music method shown an increase activation in several brain areas, with widespread bilateral hemodynamic responses in occipital lobe, bilateral cerebellum, temporal lobe, in the right lateral prefrontal cortex as well hemodynamic responses in the left middle frontal gyrus.

Music activity can have effects that improve the psychological health of individuals. These improvements refer to modulation of emotion, neurocognition, and behaviour. Another important conclusion is the social function of the music. Music seems to be capable of engaging in social behaviour, involves communication, increase interindividual trust, improve social cohesion of the group. In summary, making music is an activity that involves several social functions.

However, is it possible to improve quality of life with music method in severe mental illness? The term severe mental illness (SMI) has been used to refer psychiatric disorders that are persistent over time and that result in serious impairment in one or more domains of functioning, such as social relations, employment, and family relations. Meta-analytical studies have found a relationship between severity of disorder and quality of life measures.

The use of music stimuli to convey information may imbue the learning experience with positive emotional associations. Thereby, scientific literature suggests that music may serve a therapeutic function among populations with SMI, including overall reduction in psychotic symptoms, reduction in negative symptoms of schizophrenia, improved social functioning and increase in subjective sense of community participation, decreased social isolation and increased level of interest in external events.

The stigma of mental illness remains a powerful negative attribute in all-social relations. Discrimination is also about the conditions in which our patients live in their community. The stigma of severe mental disorders contributes to social isolation and social exclusion. The main goal is social integration of people with SMI in the community through music investigating the quality of life and self-esteem outcomes.

Method: The musical activity consists on choral singing 1 hour a week conducted by a professional music with training in music pedagogy and learning strategies and patterns of emotional modulation led by a psychologist.

Persons with and without mental illness favouring social integration form the choral group.

Different aspects that are promoted:

- Musical practice: choral singing, musical language, rhythm, intonation, and technique voice-articulation.
- Neurocognitive strategies are directed by the psychologist to improve attention, memory executive function and emotional modulation.
- Psychomotor skills aimed to improving the appropriate tone for action and facial and body gestures.
- Social skills: active listening, empathy, motivation to belonging to a group.
- Participants create a common artistic project: Concert Performance.
- Decisions concerning the group are made in assemblies, in which the whole group take part. People are distributed depending on their vocal tone (soprano, alto, tenor and bass).

Outcomes measures: The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) and The Quality of Life Scale of WHO Spanish version (WHOQOL Bref, Lucas C. 1998) were assessed in baseline and at post condition (12 month of choral sessions).

Results: Twenty-six people were recruited to the study of whom 13 with SMI and 12 without mental illness. The mean age was 46 years, and de gender were 11 male (44%). Statistical analysis shown that people with SMI achieved significant improvement over time in terms of Quality of life and self-esteem measurements.

Conclusions: Performing musical activity, specifically choral singing (1hour a week) with SMI along with other people without mental problems promotes social integration.

Facilitating contact between people with and without mental illness by creating a common artistic project prevents social isolation of SMI and promotes the wellbeing.

Keywords: social integration; quality of life; self-esteem; musical therapy; severe mental illness
