

# Music Selection and Use Strategies in Music Therapy

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## ABSTRACT

Music therapy, as a kind of non-pharmacological treatment, is gradually gaining attention in China. The aim of this thesis is to discuss the issues related to music selection and use of strategies in music therapy. Firstly, the definition and basic principles of music therapy as well as the physiological and psychological effects of music on human beings are introduced. Secondly, the principles and criteria of music selection are analysed, including the characteristics of music genres, individual differences of patients and the evaluation of music therapy effects. Then, specific methods of music application strategies, such as playing, listening and composing, as well as the combination of music with other therapeutic means, are explored. Then, through case studies, the application of music selection and use strategies in actual therapy is further elaborated. In addition, corresponding countermeasures are proposed to address the challenges faced in music therapy.

## KEYWORDS

Music therapy; Music selection; Application strategies; Therapeutic effects; Individual patient differences

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Music therapy is a therapeutic method using music as a tool, aiming at positively influencing people's physiology and psychology through music, helping people to improve their psychological condition and quality of life. With the acceleration of social rhythm and the increase of life pressure, more and more people have mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression. Music therapy, as a non-pharmacological treatment method, has received more and more attention. The purpose of this paper is to explore the strategies of music selection and use in music therapy, with a view to providing useful references for music therapy practice.

## 2. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC THERAPY

### 2.1. Physiological and Psychological Effects of Music on Human Beings

Music has a significant regulating effect on people's psychological state. Music can relieve people's stress and anxiety, elevate their mood level and increase their sense of pleasure. Research has found that music can stimulate the brain to release neurotransmitters such as oxytocin, which in turn produces relaxation and pleasure effects. In addition, music can also improve people's self-expression ability, help people relieve emotional distress and improve their psychological state. Secondly, music also has a positive effect on people's emotional expression and cognitive function. Music can stimulate people's emotions and help them better understand and express their emotions. In music

therapy, through music activities, patients can better understand their emotions and improve their ability to regulate their emotions. At the same time, music can also stimulate people's cognitive function, improve attention, memory and learning ability. It has been found that music can promote the synergy between the right and left hemispheres of the brain and improve cognitive efficiency. In addition, music has a positive effect on one's physiological health. Music can reduce blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory rate, and improve the function of the cardiovascular system. Music also promotes physical relaxation, reduces muscle tension and improves immunity. It has been found that music can reduce pain perception and has a significant therapeutic effect on chronic pain patients.

## **2.2. Basic Process and Goals of Music Therapy**

Music therapy is a therapeutic method that uses music as a tool, aiming to positively influence human physiology and psychology through music, and help individuals achieve the goal of physical and mental health. The basic process of music therapy includes assessment, development of a treatment plan, implementation of the treatment and evaluation of the treatment effects. In the process of music therapy, patients first need to be assessed to understand their physical, psychological and social needs, as well as their attitudes and preferences towards music. The assessment helps the therapist to understand the individual differences of the patient so that a personalised treatment plan can be developed [1]. After developing a treatment plan, the therapist will implement music therapy according to the plan. The methods of music therapy include playing, listening and composing music. Playing music can help patients release emotions and reduce anxiety and depression; listening to music can help patients relax and improve sleep quality; creating music can help patients improve self-expression and creativity.

During the implementation of the treatment, the therapist will make adjustments according to the patient's feedback and treatment effects to ensure the effectiveness of the treatment plan. At the same time, the therapist also needs to evaluate the patient's therapeutic effect on a regular basis to determine the achievement of the therapeutic goals. The goals of music therapy mainly include improving the patient's emotional state, enhancing the patient's mental health, strengthening the patient's social skills and improving the patient's quality of life. Through music therapy, patients can learn strategies to cope with stress and emotions, improve self-awareness and self-esteem, and enhance their connection and communication skills with others, thus improving their quality of life.

## **3. PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR MUSIC SELECTION**

### **3.1. Characteristics and Scope of Application of Music Genres**

Music genres are widely varied, including classical music, jazz, rock music, pop music, ethnic music and so on. Different music genres have different characteristics and scope of application, and have different roles in music therapy.

Classical music has a harmonious and beautiful melody, which can help people relax and relieve anxiety and depression. Jazz and rock music have a strong sense of rhythm, which can stimulate people's emotions and relieve emotional stress. Pop music usually has simple and easy-to-understand melodies and lyrics, which can arouse people's empathy and improve their emotional state. Ethnic music has strong regional characteristics and cultural connotations, which can help people understand and feel other cultures and broaden their horizons.

In music therapy, the appropriate type of music is chosen according to the patient's specific situation and needs. For example, for patients with more obvious symptoms of anxiety and depression, classical music can be chosen for treatment; for patients with greater emotional fluctuations and the need to release emotions, jazz or rock music can be chosen. In addition, the choice of music type can also be

made according to the patient's interests and preferences, to improve the enthusiasm and effect of the patient's participation in music therapy [2].

### **3.2. Association Between Patients' Individual Differences and Music Selection**

Firstly, patients' age, gender and cultural background all have an impact on music selection. For example, individuals of different ages may respond differently to different types of music. Younger people may prefer pop and rock music, while older people may be more inclined to classical and folk music. Gender and cultural background may also influence musical preferences; women may prefer softer, more lyrical music, while men may prefer more passionate, dynamic music. Therefore, music therapists need to choose appropriate music according to the patient's age, gender and cultural background. Secondly, the patient's emotional state and psychological needs are also important considerations in music selection. Emotional states such as anxiety, depression and fear need to be regulated and relieved by different types of music. For example, soft and melodious music can help relax and reduce anxiety, while rhythmic and energetic music can stimulate positive emotions in patients. In addition, patients' psychological needs, such as seeking comfort, expressing emotions or solving problems, also need to be met through music. Music therapists need to choose appropriate music according to the patient's emotional state and psychological needs. Finally, the patient's physiological condition and music preference also need to be considered. Different physiological conditions, such as pain, insomnia and recovery, need to be regulated and improved by different types of music. The patient's musical preference, i.e., the type of music and repertoire that the patient prefers on his or her own, is also an important basis for music therapy. Respecting patients' music preference can enable patients to better participate in music therapy and improve the therapeutic effect [3].

### **3.3. Interaction Between Music Therapy Effect Assessment and Music Selection**

Firstly, music selection should be based on the patient's specific situation. The therapist needs to carefully select music suitable for the patient according to the patient's age, personality, cultural background, music preferences and psychological condition. Such music can stimulate the patient's positive emotions and promote the improvement of their mental health. During the treatment process, the therapist needs to constantly observe and assess the patient's response to the music, so as to adjust the music selection in time and make it closer to the patient's actual needs. Secondly, the evaluation of the effect of music therapy can help therapists understand whether the music selection is appropriate or not. Therapists need to assess the patient's emotional changes, behavioural improvements and physiological responses during the music therapy process through observation, interviews and other methods, so as to judge whether the music selection can achieve the expected therapeutic effect. If the assessment results show that the music selection is not satisfactory, the therapist needs to reconsider music that is more suitable for the patient. In addition, with the deepening of music therapy research, some tools and methods for assessing the effectiveness of music therapy have emerged, such as the Music Therapy Response Assessment Scale and the Music Therapy Process Record Form. These tools can help therapists assess the effects of music therapy more objectively and systematically and provide a basis for music selection [4].

In conclusion, music selection and music therapy effect assessment are two links that interact and promote each other in the music therapy process. Only when the music selection matches the patient's needs can music therapy be fully utilised to help patients achieve improved mental health. Therefore, therapists need to continue to learn and accumulate experience to improve the accuracy of music selection, and at the same time, make full use of the results of the music therapy effect assessment to continuously optimise the music therapy programme with a view to improving the effect of music therapy.

## **4. SPECIFIC METHODS OF MUSIC APPLICATION STRATEGIES**

### **4.1. Playing, Listening and Creating in Music Therapy**

Playing music can give patients an outlet for self-expression, help them release their emotions and reduce pressure. For the performer, expressing their emotions through music can enhance self-awareness and self-acceptance. For the listener, playing music can create a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere, helping to reduce anxiety and stress. Secondly, listening to music is also an important music therapy activity. By listening to music, patients can gain an emotional resonance and stimulate inner emotions and memories. The choice of music should be based on the patient's specific situation and needs in order to achieve the best therapeutic effect. Finally, creating music is an advanced form of music therapy. Through composing music, patients can give full play to their creativity and imagination, and enhance their ability of self-expression and self-realisation. Composing music can help patients build self-confidence and enhance their sense of self-worth [5].

### **4.2. The Combination of Music and Other Therapeutic Means**

The combination of music and psychotherapy can better help patients solve their psychological problems. The goal of psychotherapy is to understand the psychological problems of patients through communication with them and guide them to find ways to solve the problems. In this process, music can be used as an effective tool to help patients express their emotions and relieve anxiety and depression. For example, through music therapy, patients can release their emotions and achieve psychotherapeutic effects in the process of playing, listening to or creating music. Secondly, the combination of music and physiotherapy can improve the patient's physical function. The goal of physiotherapy is to improve the patient's physical function through various physical means, such as massage and acupuncture. In this process, music can be used as an auxiliary means to help patients relax physically and mentally and improve the therapeutic effect. For example, during the rehabilitation process, patients can listen to relaxing music to relieve physical pain and improve the speed of recovery. In addition, the combination of music and education can improve the cognitive ability of patients. The goal of educational therapy is to improve the cognitive function of patients through various educational means, such as intellectual training and language training. In this process, music can be used as an effective tool to help patients improve their concentration, memory and learning ability. For example, through music therapy, patients can be trained in the sense of rhythm and pitch, thus improving their cognitive ability.

### **4.3. Strategies for the Application of Music Therapy in Different Patient Groups**

Music therapy is a therapeutic method using music as a tool, which can be applied to different patient groups, including children, adults, the elderly and so on. In music therapy, the choice of music and the strategy of applying it are very important and need to be adjusted according to the specific conditions and needs of the patients.

For children patients, music therapy can help them develop cognitive, social and emotional abilities through interesting music activities, such as Orff music and music games. In addition, music therapy can be used to treat children with conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder, helping them to improve their concentration, reduce anxiety and improve their social skills through structured music activities.

For adult patients, music therapy can be applied to psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia. Through music selection and use of strategies, it can help patients release emotions, relieve stress and improve self-expression. For example, for patients with anxiety disorders, relaxing music can be chosen to help them relax physically and mentally; for patients with depression, warm and soft music can be chosen to help them relieve their depression [6].

For elderly patients, music therapy can be applied to cognitive disorders, mood disorders and other diseases. Through the selection of music and the use of strategies, it can help the elderly to improve their memory, cognitive ability and emotional regulation. For example, music reminiscence therapy can be used to guide the elderly to recall the good times in the past and enhance their life satisfaction; music emotion therapy can be used to help the elderly express and regulate their emotions and improve their emotional stability.

## **5. CASE STUDY ON MUSIC SELECTION AND APPLICATION STRATEGIES**

### **5.1. A Case Study of Music Therapy for Patients with Anxiety Disorders**

Music therapy is a therapeutic method using music as a tool, aiming to improve the psychological and physiological conditions of patients. In music therapy for people with anxiety disorders, the selection of appropriate music and the use of effective strategies are crucial.

The choice of music for people with anxiety disorders should focus on the soothing and relaxing nature of the music. People with anxiety disorders often feel nervous and uneasy, so choosing soft, slow music can help them relax and reduce anxiety. For example, you can choose soft instrumental music, such as piano and violin, which have the effect of soothing emotions and relieving anxiety. Secondly, the strategy of using music in music therapy is also very important. Therapeutic effects can be achieved by playing, listening and composing music. For patients with anxiety disorders, playing music can divert their attention and reduce anxious thinking; listening to music can help them relax and relieve anxiety; and creating music can allow them to express their emotions and reduce their inner pressure [7]. In addition, other treatments, such as psychotherapy and medication, can be combined to improve the effect of music therapy. Psychotherapy can help patients recognise and deal with anxiety, and medication can relieve anxiety symptoms. Combining music therapy with other treatments can provide a more comprehensive and effective treatment programme.

### **5.2. Cases of Music Therapy for Depressed Patients**

In music therapy, music selection and use strategy for depressed patients is an important part. Depressed patients often feel depressed, lose interest and have unstable moods. Music therapy can help patients alleviate depression and improve their emotional state and quality of life through the selection and use of music. In terms of music selection, music for depressed patients should be soothing, relaxing and comforting. Soft types of music can be chosen, such as classical music, light music, and nature sounds. These music can help patients relax, relieve anxiety and tension, and improve emotional stability. In addition, choices can be made according to the patient's personal preferences and music preferences to increase patient participation and personalisation of the treatment. In terms of music use strategies, a variety of methods can be used for music therapy. Firstly, music listening can be carried out, where the patient listens to selected music, which positively affects the patient's brain and mood through the melody and rhythm of the music. Secondly, music performance can be performed, allowing patients to participate in music performance activities, such as playing instruments and singing, to express and release their inner emotions through the process of music creation and performance. In addition, music meditation and music relaxation exercises can be performed to help patients relax and relieve stress and anxiety through the guidance of music and the cooperation of guiding words [8].

In the case of music therapy for patients with depression, it can be adjusted and optimised in the light of the specific situation. For example, for patients with low mood, melodies and lyrics with inspirational and motivational effects can be selected to enhance patients' self-confidence and motivation. For patients with fluctuating moods, music changes and rhythmic adjustments can be

used to help patients stabilise their moods and maintain emotional balance. At the same time, it can also be combined with other therapeutic means, such as psychotherapy and medication, to achieve better therapeutic effects.

### **5.3. Cases of Music Therapy for Children with Attention Deficit Disorder**

In the case of music therapy for children with attention deficit disorder, music selection and application strategies are particularly important. First of all, music therapy for this kind of patients usually adopts music with strong rhythm and simple melody to help children focus their attention. For example, the playing of percussion instruments can improve children's sense of rhythm and also help them to control their emotions and behaviours. Secondly, the listening component of music therapy is crucial for children with ADHD. By listening to soft music, it can help them relax and relieve anxiety and tension. In addition, music can improve children's concentration and memory by stimulating the brain. In the music composition session, ADHD children can express their emotions and thoughts by creating music. This type of expression helps them to communicate and interact, and can also improve their self-confidence and sense of self-worth. However, the application of music therapy in ADHD children also faces certain challenges. Issues such as how to choose music according to children's individual differences, how to effectively combine music with other therapeutic means, and how to fully mobilise children's motivation during the treatment process need to be thoroughly researched and explored by music therapists [9].

## **6. CHALLENGES AND COUNTERMEASURES IN MUSIC THERAPY**

### **6.1. The Problem of Matching Music Selection with Patients' Needs**

Individual differences of patients make music selection complicated. Different patients have different music preferences, cultural backgrounds, age characteristics and psychological conditions, which requires therapists to fully consider the individual characteristics of patients when choosing music and tailor the appropriate music programme for them. In addition, the patient's emotional fluctuations during the treatment process will also affect the choice of music, and the therapist needs to adjust the music programme according to the patient's real-time feedback. Secondly, the characteristics and scope of application of music genres also bring some trouble to music selection. There are many types of music, each with its own unique emotional expression and rhythmic characteristics. When choosing music, therapists need to understand the applicable scenarios and therapeutic effects of various music genres to ensure that the selected music can achieve the expected therapeutic goals. At the same time, therapists also need to pay attention to the safety of music and avoid using music that may trigger discomfort in patients. In addition, the interaction between the assessment of music therapy effect and music selection is also the key to matching the music selection with the patient's needs. Therapists need to continuously assess the effect of music therapy through communication and observation with patients, and adjust the music selection according to the assessment results, in order to achieve an accurate match between music and patients' needs [10].

### **6.2. Cultivation and Qualification of Music Therapy Professionals**

First of all, the cultivation of music therapy professionals needs to have comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Students need to learn music theory, psychology, and basic medical knowledge at the university level, and also need to participate in practical operations, such as playing, listening, and composing. In addition, students need to learn how to choose music according to the individual differences of patients, and how to combine music with other therapeutic means. Secondly, the training of music therapy professionals also needs to focus on clinical practice. Students need to participate in real-life scenarios of music therapy during their internship, such as music therapy practice in hospitals, nursing homes, special education schools and other places. Through practice,

students can better understand the application strategies of music therapy and improve their clinical operation ability [11]. In addition, the qualification of music therapy professionals is also an important link. In China, music therapy has not yet become an independent profession, so the qualification mainly relies on certificates in related fields. Such as psychological counsellor, rehabilitation therapist and other certificates. At the same time, music therapists can also improve their professionalism by participating in professional training, publishing papers and other ways to lay the foundation for their career development. Finally, the cultivation of music therapy professionals also needs to strengthen the teachers' strength and the construction of teaching materials. At present, the number of teachers specialising in music therapy in China is limited, and teaching materials are relatively scarce. Therefore, strengthening the teachers' strength and teaching materials construction, and improving the quality of teaching is the key to the training of music therapy professionals.

### **6.3. Integration and Promotion of Music Therapy in the Mainstream Medical System**

First of all, the effect of music therapy is difficult to be measured by traditional medical standards, which makes it difficult to gain sufficient recognition in the mainstream medical system. The effects of music therapy are often assessed by patients' subjective feelings and behavioural changes, and these assessment criteria are not accepted by all healthcare professionals [12]. Secondly, the shortage of music therapy professionals is also an important factor that limits its promotion in the mainstream healthcare system. Music therapy requires professional music therapists to perform, and the current number of music therapists in China is far from meeting the demand. In addition, the training and certification system of music therapists is not perfect enough, which makes the professionalism of music therapy questionable. In addition, the integration of music therapy into the mainstream healthcare system faces the problem of insufficient funding and resources. Music therapy requires specialised equipment and venues, as well as sufficient time and manpower to carry out. However, these resources and funding are often difficult to secure in the existing healthcare system.

Despite these challenges, the integration and promotion of music therapy in the mainstream healthcare system remains significant. Music therapy can help patients relieve stress and improve their quality of life, and it even has an adjunctive effect on the treatment and rehabilitation of certain diseases. Therefore, we should actively explore how music therapy can be better integrated and promoted in the mainstream healthcare system, for example, by strengthening the training and accreditation of music therapists, enhancing the level of research on music therapy, as well as striving for more policy and financial support. Only in this way can music therapy play a greater role in the mainstream healthcare system and bring benefits to more patients.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In the field of music therapy, the selection of music and the strategy of using it is a critical and complex task. Through in-depth analyses of the characteristics of music genres, individual patient differences, and therapeutic goals, we can more accurately match music with therapeutic needs and enhance the effectiveness of music therapy. At the same time, diversified music application strategies, such as playing, listening, composing, etc., as well as the combination with other therapeutic means, provide patients with a richer and more personalised therapeutic experience. However, music therapy still faces many challenges in China, such as the matching of music choices with patients' needs, the training and qualification of professionals, and the integration and promotion of music therapy in the mainstream healthcare system. For this reason, the field of music therapy in China needs to further strengthen its research, explore music therapy models suitable for nationals, and enhance the status and influence of music therapy in the field of mental health.

In conclusion, music selection and application strategies have a pivotal position in music therapy. Through in-depth research and practice, we can continuously optimise the music therapy programme,

provide more effective music therapy services for patients, and promote the development of music therapy in China.

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