

# Disco beat good for CPR, but time to throw in the towel on musical aids

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Disco Science is better than no music at all at helping to deliver the required number of chest compressions (CPR) to save a heart attack victim's life before s/he gets to hospital, reveals research published online in *Emergency Medicine Journal*.

But Disco Science, which featured in the soundtrack to Guy Ritchie's film *Snatch* in 2000, still doesn't improve the depth of compression, leading the authors to suggest that it's time to give up on trying to find the best musical track to aid the procedure.

The annual UK incidence of heart attacks occurring outside hospital for those aged under 76 is 123 per 100,000 of the population. Starting cardiopulmonary resuscitation, more popularly known as CPR, as soon as possible, significantly improves survival and can nearly triple [discharge rates](#), the evidence shows.

But the evidence also shows that CPR is often done badly, even when carried out by trained healthcare professionals, so the search for the best musical training aid has continued.

The Bee Gees' song *Stayin' Alive* has been advocated as a suitable tune in the US, while the children's song, *Nellie the Elephant* had been thought to be the optimal musical accompaniment to aid the delivery of CPR in the UK.

But it has since been discredited because while it helps to maintain a

compression rate of 100 a minute, it doesn't help to provide the right compression depth of 5 to 6 cm, say the authors.

They therefore compared Achy Breaky Heart by Billy Ray Cyrus, or Disco Science by Mirwais, with no music at all to see which was more helpful.

Seventy four delegates attending an Australian College of Ambulance Professionals conference in Auckland, New Zealand, volunteered to deliver CPR on a training dummy. Around half had received CPR training within the previous year.

A third (35%) of the volunteers were intensive care [paramedics](#); one in four (26%) were paramedics; one in five (20%) were students; and a similar proportion (19%) were other healthcare professionals.

The proportion of volunteers who maintained compressions within the optimal range of 100 to 120 a minute was significantly higher when listening to Disco Science (82%) than when listening to Achy Breaky Heart (64%) or no music at all (65%).

But over a third of compressions were still too shallow, irrespective of the test method applied, and incorrect hand positioning was observed for over half to two thirds of all completed compressions.

"When considering the combined importance of correct depth and rate, the authors are unconvinced that music provides any benefit in improving the quality of [CPR](#) compared with a metronome or audible feedback, suggesting that that this interesting but unproductive area of resuscitation research should be discontinued," conclude the authors.

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