

# New study review examines benefits of music therapy for surgery patients

November 19 2012, by Allison Perry

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Lori Gooding works with spina bifida patient Joshua Divens during a music therapy session at Kentucky Children's Hospital.

(Medical Xpress)—A new study review published by the University of Kentucky found that music therapy can be beneficial to patients before, during and after a surgical procedure and may reduce pain and recovery time.

Published in the [Southern Medical Journal](#), the review examined the use of music in the preoperative, intraoperative and postoperative stages of the surgical process, and music was shown to have positive results in all three stages. [Patients](#) were less anxious before the procedure and recovered more quickly and satisfactorily after by being exposed to music intra- and post-operation. They also required less sedative medication and reported better satisfaction with their medical

experience.

"Music therapists have long known that music can be an effective tool to manage [pain](#) and anxiety," said Lori Gooding, UK director of music therapy and lead author on the review. "Here at UK, our music therapists regularly use music-based interventions to help patients manage both pain and anxiety."

Some research suggests that music-based interventions can be effective in reducing anxiety, [pain perception](#) and sedative intake. Music that is selected by trained personnel is preferred because specific guidelines for music selection should be followed in order to maximize its positive effect on patients, though the patient's musical tastes should still be considered. It is suggested that several "playlists" be offered and the patient can choose one that best suits their tastes.

Characteristics of the music are also important in effective music therapy. Among other features, the tempo, rhythm and volume of the music can be carefully controlled in order to maximize the positive effect that music can have. Calm, slow, gentle music was shown to produce the most positive results and facilitate relaxation and pain reduction in patients. Data proposes that music could be beneficial in reducing cost and length of stay in intensive care units.

Other findings show that medical music therapists serve as good consultants when implementing music medicine-based interventions. Specialized training can help them to better manage pain and anxiety in surgical patients and it has been proposed that live performances for patients are more effective than recorded music.

UK began providing [music](#) therapy for patients in Kentucky Children's Hospital, UK Chandler Hospital and UK Good Samaritan Behavioral Health in October 2010. Based on the findings from this review,

Gooding and her team have begun implementing two pilot programs in the pre-op unit at UK, one for procedural support/pain and the other for patient distress.

"Our goal is to decrease patient pain and anxiety as well as improve satisfaction with the surgical experience," Gooding said. "We also hope the program benefits staff by allowing them to do their jobs more easily and effectively."

In 2013, Gooding and colleague Olivia Yinger will present findings on procedural support [music therapy](#) to reduce pediatric pain and distress at the International Symposium on Pediatric Pain in Sweden.

**More information:** [journals.lww.com/smajournalonline/Full-Text/2012/11/0009/Procedural\\_Support\\_Music\\_Therapy\\_for\\_Pediatric\\_Pain\\_and\\_Distress\\_in\\_the\\_Pre-Operative\\_Care.9.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/smajournalonline/Full-Text/2012/11/0009/Procedural_Support_Music_Therapy_for_Pediatric_Pain_and_Distress_in_the_Pre-Operative_Care.9.aspx)

Provided by University of Kentucky

Citation: New study review examines benefits of music therapy for surgery patients (2012, November 19) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-11-benefits-music-therapy-surgery-patients.html>

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