

Music therapy increases effectiveness of pulmonary rehabilitation for COPD patients

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Patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and other chronic respiratory disorders who received music therapy in conjunction with standard rehabilitation saw an improvement in symptoms, psychological well-being and quality of life compared to patients receiving rehabilitation alone, according to a new study by researchers at The Louis Armstrong Center of Music and Medicine at Mount Sinai Beth Israel (MSBI). Study findings were published this week in *Respiratory Medicine* and suggest that music therapy may be an effective addition to traditional treatment.

COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States with symptoms including shortness of breath, wheezing, an ongoing cough, frequent colds or flu, and chest tightness. Patients with COPD are often socially isolated, unable to get to medical services and underserved in rehabilitation programs, making effective treatment difficult.

The 68 study participants were diagnosed with chronic disabling respiratory diseases, including COPD. Over the course of six weeks, a randomized group of these patients attended weekly music therapy sessions. Each session included live music, visualizations, wind instrument playing and singing, which incorporated breath control techniques. Certified music therapists provided active music-psychotherapy. The music therapy sessions incorporated patients' preferred music, which encouraged self-expression, increased engagement in therapeutic activities and an opportunity to cope with the challenges of a chronic disease.

"The care of chronic illness is purposefully shifting away from strict traditional assessments that once focused primarily on diagnosis, morbidity and mortality rates," said Joanne Loewy, DA, Director of the Louis Armstrong Center for Music and Medicine at MSBI, where the study was conducted. "Instead, the care of the chronically ill is moving toward methods that aim to preserve and enhance quality of life of our [patients](#) and activities of daily living through identification of their culture, motivation, caregiver/home trends and perceptions of daily wellness routines."

"Music therapy has emerged as an essential component to an integrated approach in the management of chronic respiratory disease," said Jonathan Raskin, MD, co-author of the study and Director of the Alice Lawrence Center for Health and Rehabilitation at MSBI. "The results of this study provide a comprehensive foundation for the establishment of [music therapy](#) intervention as part of pulmonary rehabilitation care."

More information: Bernardo Canga et al. AIR: Advances in Respiration – Music therapy in the treatment of chronic pulmonary disease, *Respiratory Medicine* (2015). [DOI: 10.1016/j.rmed.2015.10.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmed.2015.10.001)

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