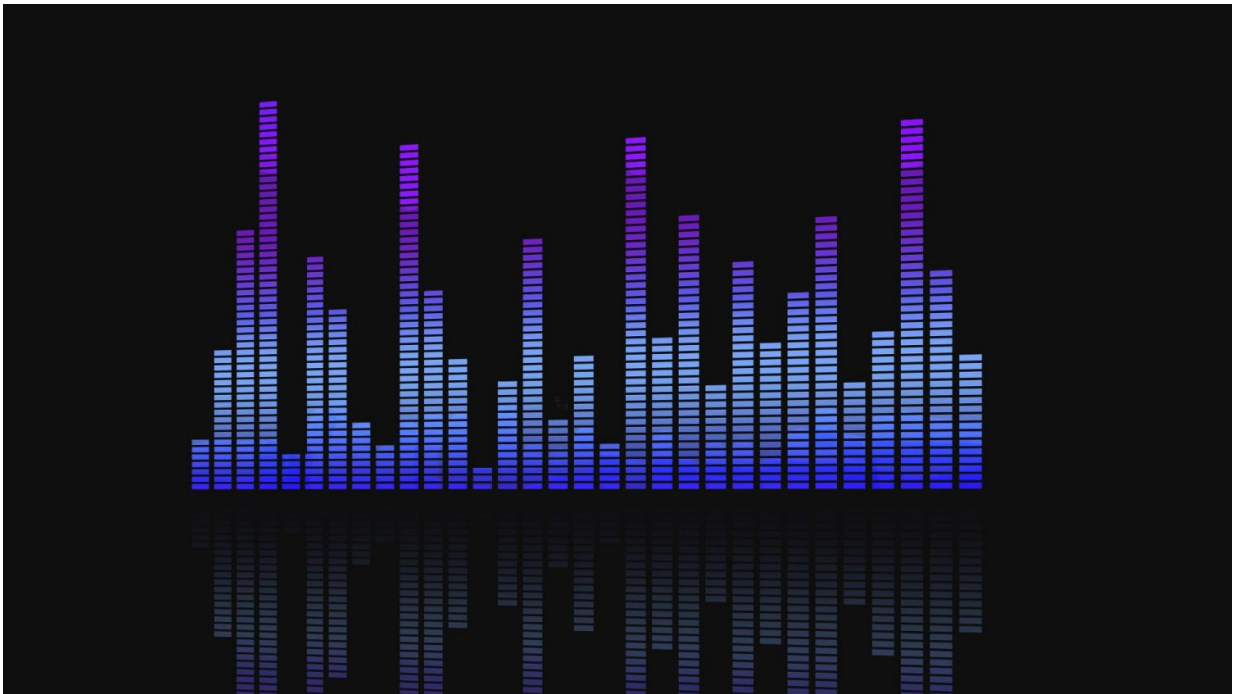


# Music therapy aids healing of military personnel

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A new paper published in *Music Therapy Perspectives* examines the importance of music therapy in military healthcare. There has been an increase in music therapy to treat combat-related injuries in recent years. With this growth in the use of the therapy, the researchers involved believe it's important for practitioners to publish more program evaluations and patient outcomes data.

The military healthcare system is presented with significant challenges following recent conflicts. With advances in military medicine and technology, survival rates are higher and more service members leave combat with psychological injuries, including [traumatic brain injury](#) and [posttraumatic stress disorder](#). Such injuries present complex difficulties for treatment because of overlapping symptoms due to multiple health conditions, stigma of receiving care in military culture, and treatment options available within the military healthcare system.

Integrating creative arts therapies in military treatment can present challenges; many patients benefit from individualized care programs. To overcome such issues and ensure consistent, high quality treatment the researchers believe it's important for [music](#) therapists and treatment centers to share program evaluations and successes, particularly by publishing more program evaluations and patient outcomes data in order to further validate program models, expand implementation, and provide research evidence. The paper outlines the current program models at two facilities, the National Intrepid Center of Excellence at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the Intrepid Spirit Centre at Fort Belvoir.

Research has shown that creative arts therapies improve patient outcomes. Blast injury often results in damage to white matter and connective tissue, and psychological trauma resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder disrupts processes in multiple brain regions, heightening some systems and deactivating others. Studies suggest that music has strong effect on multiple neural networks and can assist with rebuilding connections between various regions of the brain. Studies also show that the brain releases dopamine while patients listen to music. This promotes motivation, learning, and reward-seeking behavior. Thus, listening to music can create an enhanced learning environment and rebuild damaged neural connections.

"Music [therapy](#) is a dynamic [treatment](#) method for service members recovering from the invisible wounds of war," said Hannah Bronson, one of the paper's authors. "Building awareness of its benefits with this population can extend the power of music and its healing properties to many more men and women in uniform and their families."

**More information:** "Music Therapy Treatment of Active Duty Military: An Overview of Intensive Outpatient and Longitudinal Care Programs" *Music Therapy Perspectives*, [DOI: 10.1093/mtp/miy006](https://doi.org/10.1093/mtp/miy006)

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