

BUILDING VISIBILITY AND VALUE FOR MUSIC THERAPY

By

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ABSTRACT

Music therapy is a progressing field of inquiry and practice with wide application and proven benefits in varied clinical settings. Unfortunately, misunderstanding of creative therapies and general distrust of alternative non-medical interventions have deterred members of the general public as well as key stakeholders such as insurance companies, hospitals, schools, and clinics from embracing creative practices as a form of therapy. The research in this report starts with a short history, as well as an exploration of the mental, cognitive and physical benefits of music in various clinical settings. In the second half, management techniques and expansion of accessibility is explored while imagining what the music therapy field could look like in the future. In addition, discussion of industry barriers and recommendations will be of use to current therapists as well as those seeking entry to the profession of clinical music therapy.

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Building Visibility and Value for Music Therapy

Introduction

In Western society, people often first turn to standard medical methods when trying to heal mental or physical illnesses. However, alternative intervention methods that offer direct or complementary healing benefits are increasingly gaining attention and popularity. Among these are holistic therapy, homeopathy, qigong, reiki as well as creative therapies that involve diverse forms of art-based expression and participation including Music Therapy.

Creative therapies are used in a variety of settings, such as health institutions and education centers, where individuals struggling with physical and mental health issues can receive extra support. Studies show that for people of all ages, taking care of one's mental health and engaging in social interactions are just as beneficial to our physical health as diet and exercise (Tsegaye, Ticker and Tomaino). There are numerous forms of arts-based therapies designed to augment people's mental health. Dance therapy is one form that often involves group sessions which promotes sociability and strengthens gross motor skills. Art therapy involving activities such as drawing, painting and sculpting typically helps people express and identify certain emotions as well as improving dexterity (Tsegaye, et al). While there is much research that supports a range of creative means in a health and wellness context, the research for this paper is primarily focussed on music therapy which is the most studied creative therapy and at this point, evidences the broadest range of mental health and motor skill benefits.

For centuries, music has been valued by cultures all over the world for its healing properties. Studies of ancient Greece have illuminated the use of flutes for their restorative

benefits (Dritsas). Only within the past couple decades, however, has music therapy become a more widely visible and professional field of study and practice in the United States and other western countries. As a result of increased interest and research, practices and settings have diversified. Doctors, psychologists and scientists believe that music therapy could be an even stronger treatment in the future and thrive in additional settings, considering the high volume of evidence that current techniques help with an array of conditions, from arthritis to autism.

Today, the field of music therapy is evolving rapidly, due to its expressive nature and its ability to affect an array of physical, cognitive and emotional disorders. The American Music Therapy Association states, “Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program” (AMTA). Outcomes include symptom reduction of physical and mental disorders, help retrieving memories, improved physical and verbal rehabilitation, and numerous other positive effects.

The practices and benefits of music therapy deserve more recognition and support in the U.S. and elsewhere, affirming the need for education- and communication-based strategies to increase visibility, accessibility and financial assistance geared toward a greater range of clientele. Unfortunately, misunderstanding of creative therapies and general distrust of alternative non-medical interventions have deterred members of the general public as well as key stakeholders such as insurance companies, hospitals, schools and clinics from embracing creative practices as a form of therapy. The research in this report starts with a short history, as well as an exploration of the mental, cognitive and physical benefits of music in various clinical settings. In the second half, management techniques and expansion of accessibility is explored while imagining what the music therapy field could look like in the

future. In addition, discussion of industry barriers and recommendations will be of use to current therapists as well as those seeking entry to the profession of clinical music therapy.

Methodology includes research from interviews, music therapy institutions and articles describing case studies and exploration of evidence-based information on how music benefits people, as well as the practice of therapy sessions now and throughout history. Valuable information and insight came from the opportunity to work with and learn from music therapy pioneer Concetta Tomaino and her work at the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function (IMNF) in Mount Vernon, NY where innovative music therapy programs are held and extensive research is carried out.

As a result of the research here, it is hoped that readers will have a better understanding of the uses and value of music therapy as a whole, in order for this field to grow and benefit a wider audience worldwide. No matter how skilled a person is at music, visual- or movement-based art forms, active involvement in arts participation can take a person out of their everyday routine in order to relieve chronic stress and depression and create the conditions necessary to strengthen motor skills such as speech and dexterity among other useful applications of creative therapy in health.

Brief History

Every culture has always had their own form of music and evidence of music offering healing effects has been traced back to writings by Aristotle and Plato. In some of Aristotle's publications it is revealed that in ancient Greece the sound of flutes playing Phrygian music and certain sacred songs served as a sonic voice to enhance different emotions, such as fear, pity and

enthusiasm, in order to process life events. The vibrations of these sounds were also said to be good for the soul and could evoke catharsis in order to avoid a state of mania (Dritsas). This is just one example of a culture that first acknowledged the health benefits of music.

The earliest known reference to a more clinical form of music therapy, according to American Music Therapy Association, was in a 1789 Colombian Magazine article titled “Music Physically Considered” which discusses a case study revealing music's effect on a person’s soul and state of mind. In the early 1800s, a number of additional writings on how music affects the brain were published by medical professionals including Edwin Atlee, leading to further experimentation on the benefits of music regarding people’s health. Shortly following these findings, the first forms of music therapy in an institutional setting took place at Blackwell’s Island in New York where psychotherapists used music to alter dream states (AMTA).

During World War II, music therapy started to be recognized as a helpful tool to the healing process. When veterans with physical injuries and PTSD were hospitalized, musicians would play music for them on occasion to show their compassion, and the medical professionals noticed significant improvements in patients’ well being. Additionally, during the war, hundreds of new jobs were created for women, including the formation of seven full-time bands, one of which — the 403rd WAC ASF Band — was assigned to play in hospitals. At first these groups were generally employed for entertainment purposes, but after further observation, “Military officials recognized the effect music had on the morale of their troops” (Growney). It was very important for soldiers to be motivated and have confidence in themselves and their comrades, and music was proven to provide this. After the war, many of the female musicians were inspired to continue playing music in hospitals and conductor Joan Lamb started teaching a middle school band that encouraged disabled students to take part (Growney).

After World War II, many hospitals all over the world began to request that trained musicians play for the patients. With increasing requests, music therapy started to become a valid career option and universities became aware of the need to offer courses in this field. The first school to create a music therapy degree was Michigan State University in the 1940s. Since then, opportunities to receive a music therapy degree and formally practice as a music therapist have grown significantly.

Music Therapy in the 21st Century

In the past few decades, structures, practices and protocols associated with music-based interventions are gaining support and use, based on a growing body of research and experience evidencing beneficial outcomes of creative therapies. Music therapists can be found in a variety of health and wellness settings such as hospitals, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, in people's homes, and at some schools where students need extra support. Sessions typically consist of an established therapist assessing a patient's situation and needs, in order to lead an individual or group of people in a form of music-based treatment that is catered directly toward the individual patients. This often involves creating, singing, moving or listening to a piece of music that is designed to evoke a specific response in an area where an individual has been struggling. Therapy sessions can use active or passive methods: active, meaning the patient is creating or engaging with the music in some way; passive, on the other hand, means they may be listening or feeling the vibrations of music. These music therapy techniques can be used to help people of any age working through a wide range of difficulties in life from physical disabilities, mental illnesses to behavioral and emotional challenges.

Individuals may have music therapy recommended to them when they are undergoing treatment such as chemotherapy, struggling to get along with peers, recovering from a physical injury, or striving to improve diction. Older adults who are struggling with loss of memory, dementia, or the idea of being at the end of their life, have particularly benefited from music and other creative therapies. For example, an article on Createquity.com about how the arts improves lives describing the benefits of art therapy, clarifies, “This includes visual art and music helping to reduce anxiety and depression among cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, an association between music and reduction in anxiety and blood pressure in cardiovascular care, and reduction in use of pain medicine following surgery” (Tsegaye, et al). As with talking to a therapist or going to the chiropractor, anyone can benefit from music therapy at various points in life when a person requires a psychological or physiological shift. Following is a closer look at the uses of music therapy in treating children and older adults, demographic populations studied by a majority of the researchers dedicated to the rising inquiry and practice of this field.

Music Therapy for Children

Music in a clinical setting can have a huge impact on children while they are still developing, as they are extremely receptive to new experiences and information. Especially if a child is not developing cognitive and physical skills normatively, it is important to intervene early on so they are able to navigate the world with ease alongside their peers. American Music Therapy Association points out, “With young children, music therapy provides a unique variety of music experiences in an intentional and developmentally appropriate manner to effect changes

in a child's behavior and facilitate development of his/her communication, social/emotional, sensori-motor, and/or cognitive skills" (AMTA).

[Levine Music](#), established in Washington DC in 1976, is an education center that offers music classes, as well as individual and group therapy sessions which are geared toward, but not limited to, people on the autism spectrum and those with developmental and physical delays. At Levine, the individual therapy sessions may consist of lessons on instruments such as guitar or piano, dancing and listening to music, lyric analysis and song writing. These practices can help improve language, fine motor skills, emotional management, self expression and decision making. In an informational video about Levine, one mother reveals the impact the sessions have had on her son, stating, "Lucas is benefiting tremendously. We decided to bring Lucas to music therapy because we thought it would be another fun, motivating way for him to learn as well as for him to express his emotions and feelings" (Music Therapy at Levine, 0.33). The group sessions are similar in a lot of ways but may also involve practice in taking turns and role playing, which is a great way to improve social skills. This is just how one organization conducts music therapy for children but there are many other ways in which other therapists go about it.

A music therapist can also be found at most Children's Hospitals in the U.S. to aid anyone from infancy to 21 years of age, as well as adults that would be better off under pediatric care (Children's Hospital Minnesota). Music therapy sessions for infants generally consist of a trained professional singing or playing soothing music to lower the infant's heart rate and increase oxygen saturation. This can also stimulate social interaction and visual attention which is beneficial for development. For toddlers, sessions often help with emotional expression and development of control by creating new music.

In order to cope with uncomfortable procedures and long stays at the hospital, music can be used as an uplifting distraction for any age. School-aged patients benefit from similar music therapy sessions, however, they become slightly more complex with the ability to write and record songs and learn instruments to keep themselves occupied and in a positive mental state. Music therapy for teens and young adults is often used to relieve anxiety, depression and physical pain. A session may involve lyric writing or analysis to process emotions, creating playlists for mood regulation and to learn relaxation and movement exercises involving music that can be done in or outside of sessions. Similar techniques are used at other institutions for adults of any age struggling with anxiety, depression and other psychological conditions. Greta Yates, a music therapist at the Minneapolis Children's Hospital pointed out during an interview, "Success can look very different for so many kids but we are really trying to promote engagement, especially when a kid is down -- if we can just get them to sit up in bed or go to the table these can be huge successes" (Sewell and Yates).

Music Therapy for Older Adults

There are many types of music therapy applications geared toward older adults (Guy and Neve). Many people between the ages of 65 and 85 often develop illnesses such as Organic Brain Syndrome (OBS) primarily diminishing memory functions; Parkinson's, affecting coordination and speech; and Tardive Dyskinesia, causing involuntary movements. Individuals who suffer from any of these disorders can immensely benefit from music therapy because at its core, music provides rhythmic anchoring. In order to keep one's body and mind stimulated and maintaining their functions, music therapy sessions will often involve moving to music or playing drum

rhythms, as this can get people into a relaxed groove where they are able to have more control over their dexterity and coordination when their movement syncs up with the music. Singing and reciting lyrics can also rehabilitate people's control over their speech. Many therapists have reported that patients who have lost a significant amount of their speech and memory function are still able to recite a favorite rhyme or song of theirs. In other instances when people aren't able to sing, listening to a specific song can soothe their muscles, trigger old memories and help with thought processing.

As people age, coping with physical and cognitive changes can take a toll on their social lives and their ability to do activities they used to enjoy, greatly affecting their mental well-being. Group music therapy sessions help individuals connect with others, provide daily structure and become motivated to engage in other activities that they enjoy. At the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function (IMNF) in upstate New York, music therapy sessions geared toward adults have impacted thousands of people in similar ways. A man named Jeremy Deloitte who had been struggling with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after both arms were amputated reported, "Music therapy sessions with Benedika Schelby and David Ramsey helped me use music and song writing to access my feelings and put things into perspective. It was through IMNF that I was able to regain the strength and perspective I needed to go back into the community." (IMNF) This huge success improved the quality of Jeremy's life mentally and physically.

How Music Therapy Works: Music and the Brain

To many people, music therapy seems, at best, a harmless form of distraction, providing a temporary feeling of wellness. Therapist Concetta Tomaino, a noted expert in music and

cognitive health, explains in an interview, “it’s hard for people to understand the difference between a musician coming in and playing to a group of people and the highly-trained expertise that a clinical music therapist has” (Sewell and Tomaino). While everyone loves listening to music, very few are aware of music’s scientifically proven ability to heal in a clinical setting. There has been extensive research and experimentation done to support music having a positive affect on people mentally and physically. *Everything We Know About Where and How The Arts Improve Lives* states, “A 2004 review of more than 400 pieces of literature exploring the arts’ and humanities’ relationship to healthcare and the arts’ effects on health identified [a number of impacts for arts therapies](#)” (Stegaye, et al). Many people such as neurologist Oliver Sacks and psychoanalysis Carl Jung devoted a large portion of their careers to studying the healing power of the arts as a direct result of its clear effects on the brain.

Developmental psychologists have observed that learning an instrument or going to music therapy sessions early on in life can have tremendous benefits due to music’s effect on brain plasticity during development. While the brain is still growing, developmental plasticity takes place, meaning certain experiences can rewire the neurons, leaving long-lasting effects (Beentjes). This is why a child who is struggling with fine motor skills learns how to play piano, their dexterity will often improve significantly. If they wait until they are an adult to learn an instrument, it can take longer since they didn’t exercise specific neurons during development.

Playing the piano of course will not help everyone. The particular type of music engaged with during therapy sessions needs to be catered to the individual patient. Listening to specific music that is pleasurable to an individual often leads to the release of neurotransmitters associated with reward, such as dopamine and serotonin (Heshmat). This is why music serves as an easy way to alter our emotions and to relieve stress that the body is holding onto.

Additionally, listening to music can help people focus while working on a task or as a way to increase motivation and energy. People who have a harder time with neurological functions often benefit from music because it can boost cognitive performance by activating the left and right sides of the brain, eliminating cognitive barriers and maximizing one's focus and productivity (Beentjes and Reumers).

Daniel J. Levitin, author of *This is Your Brain on Music*, describes a study in which participants listened to music during an MRI, which has proven influential in increasing awareness and value for music's physiological benefits. A review of this book summarizes, "The researchers found that listening to and playing music increases the body's production of the antibody *immunoglobulin A* and *natural killer cells* — the cells that attack invading viruses and boost the immune system's effectiveness" (Novotney). This proves to us that music can help maintain overall good health and deter illnesses. Novotney also describes how sound vibrations that can be heard and felt will be absorbed by the body, a process referred to as *vibroacoustic therapy* which has many therapeutic benefits. For example, when people with Parkinson's disease absorb the sound waves, this can help their tremors go away, and it helps people with Alzheimer's by restoring regular communication throughout the brain, which is good for memory (Guy).

There is also extensive evidence to support music's application in rehabilitation. When a person has a physical injury, as did many veterans from WWII which made people recognize music's healing power, music therapy can speed up the healing process for these physical injuries by relieving stress and tightness in the body. In instances where a person needs physical rehabilitation, music is often used to help people move more, which is essential for the healing process as it promotes blood flow and strengthens muscles (IMNF). Particularly when people are

in the hospital for a long period of time, music therapy sessions that require movement can be extremely beneficial for a person's mental and physical health by getting them moving and adding a sense of structure to their day (Chen).

Additionally, studies show that soothing music is very effective at distracting a patient from physical pain by calming the nervous system and giving the brain a new element to focus on. In a case study conducted by a psychology student at Purchase College, participants were instructed to put one hand in ice cold water for as long as possible while listening to a slow song and then repeat this while listening to an upbeat song. Once this was completed, the spectator compared which song allowed the individuals to keep their hand in the cold water longer. The results, that the slow songs allowed most people to keep their hand in the water significantly longer. This case study provides evidence that soothing music has the capacity to serve as a beneficial distraction to reduce pain levels.

One of the most studied effects of music is its ability to evoke memories. Musical emotions and memory have been proven to survive in the brain longer than memories without music. A number of different parts of the brain have memory functions, each storing specific types of memory such as long-term, short-term or sensory memory. This means that if only one part of the brain is damaged, the person will lose only a certain type of memory function. Music, however, is special because it isn't just stored in one part of the brain. A specific song, for instance, can be associated with one or more types of memory. Clive Wearing, born in 1938, was a patient who had severe memory loss due to significant damage to his hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for creating new memories and keeping track of explicit long-term memories. After this part of Clive's brain was damaged, he kept thinking that he was waking up for the first time because he couldn't remember what happened just moments before. Before his

injury, Clive was a musician, and because everywhere else in his brain was intact, he still had sensory, motor, and emotional memories, which allowed him to continue to sing and play the piano flawlessly even though he had no idea where he had learned the songs (Dodds). This case study played a huge role in discovering music's ability to retrieve old memories in people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. For people whose hippocampus is not entirely damaged, listening to or playing a familiar song will bring the patient back to a moment when they developed strong emotional ties to it.

Barriers to Music Therapy in the United States

As outlined earlier in this report, there is no doubt that various forms of creative therapies provide important services that already serve a significant portion of the population here and worldwide. Unfortunately, access to clinical music therapy sessions is often non-existent or limited to those who stand to gain most from diverse mental, emotional and physical benefits of creative interventions and participation. Summarized here are primary factors challenging institutional and community interest and support of music and other arts in a therapeutic setting. While these factors are individually categorized, they relate to and mutually reinforce each other:

1. **Misconceptions:** Music therapy is relatively new and under-represented in practical and academic fields. This has resulted in many individuals misunderstanding the difference between music therapy and simply listening to music for pleasure or distraction, often deterring people from valuing music-based intervention as it relates to physical, mental or emotional well-being.

2. **Financial barriers:** Most health insurance companies do not cover supplemental therapies and interventions, resulting in limited access to available music therapy clinicians and services. Lack of insurance coverage also hinders the public from the knowledge and incentive necessary to seek and cover clinical music therapy sessions. Due to the lack of patients who are able to pay for this service without help from insurance, institutions often struggle to maintain and provide these services as an option to people who would strongly benefit from a creative form of therapy.
3. **Lack of adequate Education:** A significant root cause preventing the widespread understanding and support of creative therapies in institutionalized health settings is the lack of general access to education and training in arts and other non-medical forms of healing across the education system. Many students entering the workforce aren't aware of this field as an option. Most graduate without any meaningful exposure to the benefits of how music and other arts impact health and wellness.

These barriers all currently contribute to the value and support necessary to further develop and increase access to music and other creative therapies in a variety of community, educational and health settings. In order to create a firm foundation for future value and growth for this promising industry it is essential to further explore the economic, social, and cultural barriers to music therapy.

Lack of Understanding

The field of music therapy is gaining more support and awareness, bolstered by a growing number of academic journals and international conferences devoted to scholarship and practice in creative forms of therapy. Despite this growing body of scholarship and attention from science and arts funders, the research is not widely accessible and is even misunderstood or misinterpreted by professionals in related fields. An article published in the National Library of Medicine points out, “Arts in health research can be confusing and is frequently misunderstood by those working in the arts and in health, artists, reviewers, researchers and funders” (Francourt and Joss). These authors note that many sources are either geared toward people in the health industry, using medical or technical jargon that makes it hard for the general population to follow, or toward artists, neglecting to provide sufficient research-backed evidence of use and impact. This means that there are few consistent reference points or standards for arts in health research. As a result, music therapy is often discussed and reported in conflicting ways, increasing general misunderstanding and confusion.

If people aren't receiving clear or consistent information on the degree and diverse ways the arts can impact their health, they will likely choose a different form of therapy. The extent to which the arts improve a person's health varies from case to case, based on individual diagnosis. While art therapies aren't generally designed to replace medical treatments and interventions, participating in the arts can speed up the healing process and make many uncomfortable treatments more bearable, giving one's mind something else to actively engage with (Stuckey and Nobel). Regardless of the diagnosis and art activity, there is strong evidence to support that participation in creative therapies consistently has only positive outcomes (Francourt and Joss).

In recent years, individuals in the music therapy field are increasingly speaking up about the lack of bonafide information attempting to counteract false claims and persistent misperceptions about their work including where it can take place most effectively. Pediatric oncologists Kemper and McLean made this clear after a study they conducted in 2008 where they asked the parents of lymphoblastic leukemia patients about the type of exposure to music that their child received at home and what their thoughts were on using music as a form of therapy. Most parents used music at home to entertain and distract their child, yet the majority of them declined the idea of therapeutic use of music. It was concluded that this was because they had a skewed understanding of what this meant and how experiencing music in a clinical setting that is catered to the individual is drastically different from experiencing it at home. Upon reviewing this study, it confirms that going forward, there needs to be a more effective way of bridging the gap between arts and health to deliver clear and comprehensive information to the general public.

Providing easily digestible evidence for how music therapy can efficiently benefit people is just one step to reaching more people. Yu-Ching Chen, a masters student at Ohio University, points out in her thesis paper that we need to understand the perspectives of patients in order to present music therapy to them in a way that caters directly to them (Chen). When a person first hears about music in a clinical setting, it is common to get one demographic of people in their head of who it can help. In order to effectively promote music's power to heal, it's important to tailor information to help the recipient understand how it can help them, specifically. One of the most valuable aspects of music therapy is how unique each session is, since there is no specific formula for what a session needs to entail, it rather evolves based on the needs of the patient and the creative ideas of the therapist (Sewell and Yates).

Providing basic information and habituating creative therapies from an early age about creative therapies and arts benefits in everyday life will also help make people more open to music therapy and eliminate stigmas surrounding the field. A paper from Thompson Rivers University, written by psychology graduate student Alexa Morrison states, “art can be a form of self-nurturing which children can employ to soothe themselves when they are feeling insecure or uneasy about any future relationships or situations they may encounter” (Morrison). The goal is not to make everyone grow up to be an artist, the creative workforce includes more than enough people who aspire to sharing their talent. It is, however, important to introduce children to the arts early on so that they are able to use it as a resource for their mental and physical health on their own or take advantage of clinical creative therapy sessions.

Financial Barriers

The American health industry has categorized music therapy as a Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), making it an especially difficult service for patients and institutions to afford. Any health practice that is not part of standard medical care is considered CAM, including services such as acupuncture and massage therapy. Generally speaking, health insurance companies do not reimburse people for these services. This has resulted in access to music therapy being considered a luxury available only to select individuals, further exacerbated by general lack of visibility and promotion of creative therapies along with other alternative medicines. Coverage for all alternative medicine is often denied because, “many types of CAM don't meet strict standards set forth by insurance companies” (Prindle). Music therapists and other health professionals who understand the benefits of these services want this to change so

that their services are accessible to everyone that could potentially benefit. Until there is more widespread and comprehensive coverage by mainstream insurance, music therapy is likely to generally remain a viable option for select audiences only.

Fortunately, there are programs to help cover the cost of alternative health services. As of 2014, the Affordable Care Act made it so that all major health plans now cover 10 “essential health benefits” which music therapy could fall under if the patient so chooses (Pak). If a music therapist has additional credentials, such as being licensed as a psychologist or psychiatrist, insurance companies may cover the costs of music therapy, if the service is incorporated into the clinician's primary practice. This signifies that stand-alone music therapy sessions are still not deemed a necessity to a person’s healthcare protocol. If a mental health worker or a primary care physician deems a form of art therapy essential to a person, they can receive a “Medically Necessary” referral for the patient’s health insurance to review, usually resulting in reimbursement for a limited number of appointments.

Larger and financially well-managed health institutions such as most Children's Hospitals throughout the U.S. and upscale assisted living homes are more likely to be able to afford music therapy programs. With an increase in visibility and research to support the use and value of music therapy, many other institutions strive to offer this service, however, administrators often struggle to make this a reality due to financial and logistical limitations. Health institutions prioritize their funds to support medical services that could make a difference of life and death for a person, and if there are any funds left over, they may choose to funnel them into other services to improve the quality of life. Massage therapy, acupuncture and animal therapy are services that are frequently chosen over music therapy, simply due to people’s misconceptions of music’s benefits in a clinical setting, as well as lack of publicity and accessible research. “As

overall funding decreases and costs increase for hospice care, music therapy may be cut from the relatively few hospice programs that utilize it if these effects are not well-documented.”

(Hirokawa) When music therapists provide documentation on how their services benefit the patients, they will stand a better chance of staying employed in a hospital.

This is additionally an issue in educational settings. A 2019 article published by Harmony Music Therapy states, “Even though students show significant progress with music therapy as a related service, only a handful of Utah schools currently utilize the power of music therapy” (Two Barriers to Music Therapy in Special Education). Health and learning specialists in Utah have recently become more aware of the need for music therapy programs in education centers for people with learning disabilities, however the process of incorporating this service into schools has been very slow due to lack of awareness and funds. When a school is fortunate enough to pay for a music therapist, this is one of the few ways for people to take part in this service for free.

Since health and education institutions can not always afford to maintain a music therapy program, there are many nonprofit organizations that focus on providing access to music therapy. These are only able to sustain themselves financially with the support of donations, sponsors, grants and extra services such as education programs, research projects and fundraising events. The music therapy sessions themselves do not often bring in a large portion of the revenue because administrators try to make them as accessible to people as possible. It has become clear that, “the revenue generated through incorporation of music therapy exceeds the cost of music therapy services” (Hirokawa). Since music therapy institutions want to keep the cost of sessions low in order for them to be accessible, the therapists often incorporate music therapy into events and other health services in order to raise more money. The Institute for Music and Neurologic

Function, for instance, holds an annual fundraising event featuring music performances by well-known artists and appearances of field professionals in order to encourage extra support.

Due to reasons outlined above, institutions that offer music and other creative therapies spend an inordinate amount of energy on funding or fighting insurance, taking away their ability to put more time into providing and developing their primary services. Instead, these institutions spend time and resources on procuring funds from outside programs that provide grants and financial assistance specifically geared to uphold arts therapy programs. For example, “Fort Worth Music Therapy Fund was founded to support individuals, families, and facilities so that they do not fall between these funding gaps” (Fort Worth Music Therapy Fund). Programs like this, as well as individual donors, are the most crucial anchors to keeping non-profit music therapy institutions alive and making their services available to people who otherwise couldn’t afford them.

Access to Music Therapy Education

In order to expand the music therapy work force, there first needs to be reliable education available throughout the entire country. To be certified in this field, one must obtain a bachelor’s degree or higher in music therapy, partake in an internship and pass the board certification exam. In the U.S. there are currently only 80 undergrad and 37 graduate music therapy programs that are American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) approved, limiting students’ awareness and access to a music therapy career path. When students start university they may have a predetermined idea of what they want to major in, however, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 80% of students end up changing their major at some point in their

education career. Considering the limited number of universities that offer music therapy as a degree, most students won't have any idea that this is a viable field of study to change their major. Therefore, in order for this to be an option to more students looking for an alternate major, creative therapy programs need to be offered at more universities. The majority of students that pursue a degree in music therapy have their mind set on it from the get go and choose a school that offers it as a degree, which also means they are very limited on their options for schools they can attend. Additionally, students who require education in a specific location in order to save money may not have any options whatsoever.

Considering students pursuing music therapy in college are typically aware of this career path by the time they are in the college search process, this dilemma goes all the way back to high school years. Students need to have been exposed to music therapy in order to view it as a career option prior to graduation in order for them to consider it, calling for more publicity and research. Additionally, it is important for students to have the necessary skills prior to applying for a music therapy program. Greta Yates, music therapist at the Children's Hospital in Minneapolis, pointed out during an interview that many people who are interested in pursuing music therapy as a degree may have the passion and the knowledge, yet it is possible they will not have the musical skills required to be admitted to a program (Sewell and Yates). It takes time for people to become sufficient in a musical instrument, signifying that the process of becoming a music therapist starts long before they start pursuing it as a college degree. People who have grown up playing music would be great candidates for a music therapy program, however, even the majority of this population is often unfamiliar with this vocation or may overlook it because of its lack of visibility and available education.

Many musicians are also unprepared for how rigorous the process is to become a certified music therapist. While many elements of this career are fun and extremely rewarding, this often gives people the illusion that it will be easy. A music therapist at Harmony Music Therapy expresses her journey to entering the field and states, “75% of my class dropped out because it was much harder than they anticipated” (What Training Do Music Therapists Have?). Success in this degree requires an interest in music as well as psychology and clinical intervention which are two very different subjects. If a musician wants a job that allows them to play and create music everyday, they quickly learn that this isn’t the job for them, causing many people to drop out. This article also points out that many people are unaware at first that obtaining a music therapy license requires 1040 internship hours and continued education consisting of 100 credits every five years. These rigorous requirements are crucial in order to maintain highly educated specialists in the field, contributing to the general public taking music therapy seriously. That being said, the education system itself is not the issue. Rather, the underlying problem in growing educational opportunities in this field is the general public’s misconceptions of the degree of rigor and skill required to be a licensed music therapist.

Where Music Therapy is Going

Today, music therapy jobs can be found in every state in the U.S., however some states offer more access to creative interventions in health and wellness than others. As of 2020, according to Zippia Careers, there were 26,651 working music therapists in the U.S. and Minnesota was listed as the best state to find a job in this industry with an average annual salary of \$57,599 for music therapists. The nearby Midwest state Illinois, on the other hand, was said to

be the hardest place to find a job, with music therapists receiving an average salary of \$36,154 and many people in the field being merely interns. While the statistics on Zippia Career in 2020 revealed where music therapy is growing the most and the best places for people entering the field to look for jobs, the locations where music therapy services are most likely to be offered to a patient are vastly different. Career Explorer points out that there is currently the highest number of licensed music therapists in New York, California and Pennsylvania. This site, as well as AMTA, brings to light that additional states with large progressive cities offer a higher volume of services in this field. Growth is present in these areas due to the location of music therapy education programs and the diversity of needs within larger cities. Concetta Tomaino also points out that oftentimes, when there is a large music therapy program in a remote town, it is likely endowed by a well-to-do family that strongly believes in music's ability to heal or one of the family members strongly relies on this form of therapy. While music therapy is benefitting from more recent research, and demand for creative interventions is increasing in the U.S., it will take some time before this is reflected evenly throughout the country.

Europe is slightly ahead in recognizing the benefits of the arts in health. For example, the UN's World Health Organization recently started prescribing arts activities for patients. Doctors in many countries throughout Europe have started giving patients lists of choirs they can join to help with heart conditions or dance classes they could take for physical rehabilitation (Guzman). In the U.S., [John Hopkins Medicine](#) has taken the lead in expanding the application of music therapy interventions through experimenting with new techniques and ways to incorporate music into the entire healthcare experience for patients with physical challenges. Improving public access to music's healing ability is a new online service called [Spiritune](#), which helps with mental health and concentration by combining principles of music therapy and neuroscience.

This program additionally prompts visibility for music therapy and helps eliminate the stigma in society surrounding mental health. Growing interest and knowledge of creative therapy and its benefits have motivated artists and arts managers to increase public awareness of music therapy.

Every year, there is more research and success to support the benefits of music therapy, causing people all over the world to recognize how truly effective music is in a clinical setting. These sessions have the ability to help with such a vast array of health needs, from physical rehabilitation and pain reduction to emotional wellness and memory retrieval. There has never been a better time to participate in music therapy. However, in order to maintain this expansion, certain issues still need to be addressed.

Many people have misconceptions about what music in a clinical setting entails and how it differs from simply listening to music for enjoyment. In order to combat this vital distinction, there could be huge success by introducing music therapy practices to people at a young age; sharing success stories on more platforms; and providing research targeting every community. Oftentimes, it is up to music therapists to defend and promote their own profession. The time is right for scientists, artists, journalists, survivors and anyone else with experience and knowledge surrounding music's efficient health benefits to enlighten the greater society.

With clear information and evidence on music's benefits being shown to people outside of the music therapy field, it will be easier to unfold the financial barriers. Music therapy is rarely covered by health insurance, causing these services to be inaccessible to a large population of people. Not only does this affect the patients, this also takes a financial toll on the institution where the therapy sessions are held. By identifying this issue and advocating for more funding, the goal is for health insurance companies to recognize creative therapies as essential services -- in many cases more cost effective-- and for them to provide more reimbursement options.

Additionally, with more advocacy and education on music health benefits, individual donors and foundations providing grants will see how much of an impact their support can bring to music therapy institutions.

The lack of information and funding for music therapy has added to the inaccessibility to music therapy education. As this paper highlights: undergraduate music therapy programs need to be offered at substantially more universities and adolescent students should engage with music as an interventional treatment whenever possible. Ever since the late 1940s, this has been a viable major and career in the U.S., which is why it is shocking that there aren't more programs available today. There is a growing demand for more music therapists based on the success rate and efficiency when it is employed. Each of these issues laid out above are equally important and interdependent. In order to resolve the financial barriers for instance, accessibility to music therapy education and addressing the misconceptions surrounding this field need to be addressed as well. There is no doubt that music therapy is a crucial profession to the medical industry and it is growing rapidly with exponential research to reinforce its power and success rate.

The barriers discussed in this paper need to be at the forefront of people's minds when engaging with and advocating for music therapy. For over a year during 2020-21, a global pandemic has wreaked havoc upon the entire world's physical and mental health, and it's been music that has flourished and uplifted many people. This is the time -- the *crescendo* -- for the field of music therapy to run with the momentum of the thriving music industry, to harness music's power and success, and to overcome the many needless complexities of accessing an age-old cure for humanity.

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