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202 - Music Therapy Intervention to Reduce Caregiver Distress at End of Life: A Feasibility Study

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Context. Music therapy is frequently provided to patients at the end of life, and studies have shown a benefit in relief of symptoms and a positive impact on quality of life (QoL), but little is known regarding the effect of music therapy (MT) on caregivers. Caregivers are at risk for anxiety, emotional distress and experience anticipatory grief as the patient nears death. Caregivers are present with patients and may also benefit from MT.

Objective. To assess the impact of MT on caregivers for hospice patients and determine the feasibility of research in this population.

Methods. Twenty caregivers of patients hospitalized for general inpatient hospice care were enrolled. MT was provided by a board-certified music therapist, and sessions included pre-MT assessment, 20-45 minutes of MT, and post-MT assessment. Caregiver stress was measured with the Pearlin Role Overload Measure (ROM), QoL was measured with the Linear Analogue Self-Assessment (LASA), and depression and anxiety were measured with the Patient Health Questionnaire for Depression and Anxiety (PHQ-4). These three measures were taken pre-MT, post-MT and 6 months post-MT. Caregivers were also asked to complete a Music Therapy Program Survey post-MT.

Results. The MT intervention was completed for 15/20 caregivers (75%). Of those who did not complete MT, 2 withdrew prior, 1 was not available, 1 patient passed during the MT session, and 1 patient died prior to MT. 14 caregivers completed pre-MT and post-MT assessments, and 9 caregivers completed assessments at all 3 timepoints. The MT Program Survey (post-MT assessment, n=14) showed 100% of caregivers were very satisfied with MT and would recommend to others, 78% found MT effective for stress relief, 69% for relaxation, 71% for spiritual support, 86% for emotional support, and 71% for feeling of wellness.

Conclusion. Research on MT is feasible for acute hospice care caregivers with a majority of caregivers consenting to research and about half completing surveys pre-MT, post-MT, and 6-months post-MT (9/20). Future larger studies should be conducted to better assess the impact of MT on caregivers.