

Introduction to the Special Issue

Music Therapy and Addictions

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Almost exactly a year ago, the NYTimes Science Times featured a large colorful picture, credited to Marcos Chin depicting a singer whose microphone cord weaved as an earbud into an intricately detailed lined-maze representing the brain. The article entitled ‘The Music Channel’ was interesting enough, as it devoted attention to research that showed a pathway in the brain that is distinctly dedicated to “tuneful stimuli.”

What was unexpected-within this section-as I turned the page to continue my reading, was that just across the inside centerfold was an article about addictions and hospitalists difficulty in treating addicts, with another appealing picture credited to James Yang depicting a doctor with a clipboard and a patient hiding behind a cigarette-peaking out amongst what appears to be a forest of cigarettes.

In the article, within the section headed **Hard Cases-‘A Troubled Bond Between Hospitals and Addicts’** the author, Abigail Zuger MD wrote about how hospitalizations offer people with addictions prime opportunities that can urge them into treatment. (<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/08/in-hospitals-smoke-free-doesnt-mean-abuse-free>) At the same time, however, she points out how “ill-equipped” most hospitals are to undertake such ventures. And furthermore, how hospitalists in general are not trained to deal with addicts-that they “spend energies (sic) managing not the conditions they (sic) were trained to manage but the addictions that complicate them” She outlines some of the constructions that invade treatment quests-such as drug-using guests/visitors that unbeknown to staff, sneak the patients drugs, or how to navigate medicinal patches that have no effect, and even the

trials and tribulations of smokers who leave and then need to be considered AMAers as most hospitals have no policy for smokers.

It may not be a coincidence that the placement of this article is within the same section as the music-brain cover article. People typically think about music as having the potential to take us into an ‘altered state’-and we certainly have seen mechanisms of this, especially in the 60’s-or during times of revolution, where a nice ‘trip’ removes one from the burdens of society that are not “heard’ and/or do not allow folks to feel in control-think “Hair” or “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” or “Dark Side of the Moon.” When people think about the brain’s activity when stimulated by music, so often they then subsequently begin to think about the brain’s complex circuit system and the few means we have to understand and compute the stimulation of its altering facilities and capacities. Soon enough drugs and addictions come into this categorizing of information. In our most basic stream of thinking, people are interested in realizing the complex relationship between brain-music, and addiction.

Music therapists and many like practitioners are grateful to Helen Bonny-as her pioneering quest to define, actualize and then translate into words the transformational aspects of classical music and then her development of prescriptive themes and music programs changed music therapy listening practices. Bonny helped define the psychophysical elements of musical themes that characterize an altered state-the experience of being ‘high’ or the capacity to go somewhere else within our minds-and how this novel trip of the mind and body can be induced through music. Bonny’s experiments changed how people reflected on music therapy’s potency. She showed, without a doubt, that music could achieve altered state effects akin to those produced by LSD.

Along with the knowledge that music can elicit a ‘journey’ or altered state, comes an incredible opportunity, but also a responsibility. This is not unlike the relationship doctors realize when they are providing medicine for a patient with addictions. Some of that knowledge comes from a textbook, perhaps their neurology training, and the rest is likely learned through experience. And yet, each brain, and each person with an addiction has unique and highly personalized experiences. The use of music and music therapy

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and its capacity to foster meaningful ‘trips’ does not come without risk-and this seems particularly prevalent as in cases where music is used to help people with addictions. But perhaps these opportunities and risks present as more subtle or nuanced within our field, as the themes are imbued within domains related to culture, and taste. Music as well can often be representative of an historic event on a timeline that may or may not be representative of a triumphant and/or traumatic moment or period, for a person facing addiction. If a person’s usage of a drug is accompanied with a particular favorite kind of music, (or specific songs)-is this indicated? When a music therapist delves into implementing the same music that the patient used when using, as part of the plan of care, are there dangers, or, alternatively, might this present fertile fuel for enhanced treatment options.

The clear answer for how we answer this, just one of many questions we might face in how we understand treating people with music and medicine in addictions is in our research quests and training models. How fortunate we are to have this Special Edition of Music Therapy and Addictions. The integration of practices-specifically between nurses and

music therapists are too few and far between. And this particular volume, with special Guest Editors Kathy Murphy and Miriam Fridman reflects depthful thinking from these two perspectives. Both of these women are leaders in their respective fields and have hands-on, extensive experience in working with people facing addictions and we are grateful for their devotion to this topic.

This issue of ‘Music and Medicine’ includes a book reviews of the new Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology authored by Susan Hallam, Ian Cross, Michael Thaut, by Weng Fang En, and Patsy Tan. Finally, we are proud to introduce a linked-on International Abstract section of our website:

<https://iamminationalabstracts.wordpress.com/>

which will make reading abstracts in home languages for all of our readers a simple venture. Our Editorial Team is grateful to our International Abstract Editor Bernardo Canga and our Copy Editor Erik Baumann for their institution of the new function. We are growing in readership through ease of access mechanisms and look forward to continued submissions.