



## Music Therapy and the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

### WHAT IS NICU MUSIC THERAPY?

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Music Therapy is the skilled utilization of music elements by a certified MT-BC to facilitate several goals including increased rest/regulation, parent-infant bonding, and neurodevelopment of infants currently admitted to the NICU.

### BENEFITS OF MUSIC THERAPY

There are a significant number of positive outcomes for having music therapy present in a NICU. In Pediatric Nursing's recent publication: Benefits of a Comprehensive Evidence-Based NICU-MT Program: Family-Centered Neurodevelopmental Music Therapy for Premature Infants. (Standly, J., Gutierrez, C. 2020) several of these benefits are described in great detail, some of which include:

#### ***Increased Parent/ Caregiver Satisfaction***

Utilizing music therapy as a part of Family Centered Care (FCC) has helped reduce caregiver stress and increase their confidence in parenting and interacting with their child. Gooding, J., Cooper, L., Blaine, A., Franck, L., Howse, J., & Berns, S. (2011).

#### ***Increased Cost Effectiveness***

- ◆ Increased weight gain - Research indicates contingent music is effective in teaching sucking skills to premature infants thus increasing their weight gain, decreasing their length of stay, and promoting less stressful environment for patients and caregivers. Cevalco A, Grant R. (2005)
- ◆ Decreased length of stay - In a study focused on infant directed singing and prescriptive music listening, infants who received music therapy services left the hospital an average of 2 days earlier than those in the control group. Cevalco (2008)

#### ***Increased Noise Regulation***

Environmental music therapy increases noise regulation compliance, reduces discomfort associated with noisy conditions, and protects patients sleep. Rossetti, A. (2020), Philbin, M., Evans, J. (2006)

### COMMON INTERVENTIONS

- Multi-modal Neurological Enhancement
- Contingent Singing
- Infant-Directed Singing/ Music
- Regulated Multi-Sensory Stimulation
- Music Based Developmental Stimulation
- Music Entrainment of Physiological Functions
- Music with Proprioceptive/ Vestibular input
- Music Facilitated Procedural Support
- Environmental Music Therapy
- Family Recordings
- Heartbeat Recordings/ Songs
- Individualized Lullaby/ Songwriting
- Music Facilitated Caregiver/ Infant Bonding
- Pacifier Activated Lullaby (PAL) System
- Song of Kin



## Increased Cultural Efficacy

Music therapy can be used in the NICU as a tool to acknowledge and reinforce all levels of culture, including culture of the country and the people, but also the culture of medicine as it is practiced in each organization. Shoemark, H.,(2015)

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- ◆ Majority of experts agree that infants under the age of 28-weeks gestation should not receive music therapy
- ◆ All practitioners need to follow organizational policy when providing interventions in the NICU setting
- ◆ Often paralytics are considered contraindicative due to the side effect of heightened auditory perception

## ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

- ◆ Due to the level of acuity and necessity of expertise in the NICU several pioneers in the field have facilitated additional training opportunities to better equip the certified music therapists working in this arena.
- ◆ Practitioners can also gain expertise in music therapy assisted child birthing helping clients in select / apply chosen music, provide instruction in imagery and relaxation techniques, movement training, and other creative arts experiences

### COMMON GOALS UTILIZED

- Increase state regulation
- Enforce non-nutritive sucking
- Improve oral feeding
- Increase attainment of developmental milestones
- Enhance caregiver/ infant bonding
- Decrease physiological symptoms of stress
- Increase tolerance to non-aversive stimuli
- Increased pain management

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### **What is AMTA?**

The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) represents 10,000 music therapists, corporate members, and related associations worldwide. AMTA is committed to the advancement of education, training, professional standards, and research in support of the music therapy profession. AMTA establishes criteria for the education and clinical training of music therapists. Professional members of AMTA adhere to a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in the delivery of music therapy services. AMTA's mission is to advance public knowledge of music therapy benefits and increase access to quality music therapy services. Learn more at [www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org).