Annotated Bibliography


This review evaluates the methods and results of thirteen studies attempting to determine how effective music is in alleviating pain and stress in the critically ill. Thirteen studies (including one meta-analysis) were reviewed. While most of the studies noted some improvement, only one study noted a statistically significant one.

The meta-analysis is a useful tool for locating recent studies on the application of music in a clinical setting. One caveat or concern is possible bias due to the inclusion of a study conducted by one of the authors. Another concern is the small number of studies reviewed. However, the paucity of studies may be due to the novelty of using music as a therapy for the critically ill in Western medicine.


The trial conducted on patients the day after having heart surgery measured changes in plasma levels of oxytocin, haemodynamic parameters, oxygen saturation and subjective relaxation levels when exposed to relaxing music. The article includes a literature review, flow charts and tables. The study found no difference in haemodynamic parameters and oxygen saturation but there was a statistically significant increase in oxytocin levels and subjective relaxation in the group that listened to music versus the control group.

The results lend credence to the idea that music can increase relaxation in patients recovering from heart surgery.