



World Federation of Music Therapy
Federación Mundial de Musicoterapia

Music Therapy Research Around the World

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Research FAQs & Answers

What is music therapy research?

Research has been defined as "a systematic...inquiry which leads to a discovery or new insight, which, when documented and disseminated, contributes to or modifies existing knowledge of practice" (Bruscia, 1995, p. 21). Thus, Music Therapy research may be defined as a systematic...inquiry about music therapy, which leads to a discovery or new insight...Music therapy researchers work from a number of philosophical perspectives (Edwards, 2012), utilizing a broad range of methodologies, and asking diverse questions on theory, practice with varying populations, and professional issues. Depending on the topic, research may involve collaborating with other disciplines, and take place within interdisciplinary research teams. Data can be collected from varied sources, including:

- objective measures, such as physiological responses;
- subjective measures, such as quality of life measures or a client's statements of her/his experiences;
- therapists' or other observers' interpretations of sessions;
- therapeutic products (e.g., song lyrics; musical improvisations); and
- other relevant artifacts (e.g., music therapy texts; visual images).

In which countries is music therapy research taking place?

Research in music therapy is taking place around the world in many countries. Some studies involve international collaborations between colleagues from a number of countries. For more information about research in a particular country, refer to the website of national organizations which can be found at www.wfmt.info/resource-centers/publication-center/regional-information/

With which populations is music therapy research conducted?

Research is taking place across all the populations in which music therapy is practiced, including with infants, children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly, in medical, educational, community, and social care settings. Clinical populations who are participating in research include those who have mental health needs, developmental and educational needs, emotional and behavioral problems, Alzheimer's disease and other aging-related conditions, substance abuse problems, acquired brain injuries and neurological disorders, physical disabilities, palliative and bereavement care needs, acute and chronic pain-related conditions, acute and chronic medical conditions, and social needs which arise from any of these. Research is also being undertaken with professional music therapy populations, including people training to become music therapists.

What types of questions does music therapy research seek to answer?

Music therapy research asks questions about clinical practice, theory, professional activity and foundational topics (i.e. music within interdisciplinary practice). Research has been undertaken for questions concerning incidence, treatment, measurement, correlation, interaction, transferability and

development. Research also asks questions about events, experiences, understandings, theory building, and the art form of music itself.

Are there standards for music therapy research?

Standards for research in music therapy seek to ensure that the research is conducted ethically and is of high quality. Typically, music therapy research follows local guidelines (i.e., of the facility, agencies, or universities where research participants are recruited) and national guidelines for ethical research, which are outlined by national authorities in the country in which the research is taking place. More information about ethical research in music therapy can be found in [WFMT Ethical Practice in Music Therapy](#).

Where can I find examples of music therapy research?

Music therapy research can be found in a range of printed and on-line resources, including the following:

- I. *International Peer-reviewed Journals* - Music therapy research can be found in a wide range of journals, which either focus on the topic of music therapy or publish research in related disciplines.
 - a. Published research studies can be found by searching on-line databases such as PUBMED, MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, PSYCINFO, ERIC, JSTOR, RILM, SCOPUS. The Cochrane Library has a number of reviews on randomized controlled trials in music therapy, with comprehensive reference lists of quantitative research for a range of populations (www.cochranelibrary.com/).
 - b. A number of peer-reviewed journals specialize in music therapy research, including the following WFMT organizational members' music therapy journals as well as others. (please note: this is not an exhaustive list):
 - i. Approaches: Music Therapy & Special Music Education
www.approaches.primarymusic.gr/
 - ii. Australian Journal of Music Therapy
www.austmta.org.au/publications/ajmt-our-journal/ajmt-abstract-archive/
 - iii. Revista Brasileira de Musicoterapia (Brazilian Journal of Music Therapy)
www.revistademusicoterapia.mus.br/
 - iv. British Journal of Music Therapy
www.bamt.org/british-association-for-music-therapy-resources/journal.html
 - v. Canadian Journal of Music Therapy
www.musictherapy.ca/en/publications/journal.html
 - vi. Dansk Musikterapi (Danish Society for Music Therapy)
[www.musikterapi.org/?l%26aelig%3Bs_om_musikterapi:Tidsskrift_""Dansk_Musikterapi""](http://www.musikterapi.org/?l%26aelig%3Bs_om_musikterapi:Tidsskrift_)
 - vii. Japanese Music Therapy Association Journal
www.jmta.jp/magazine/
 - viii. Journal of Music Therapy (American Music Therapy Association)
www.jmt.oxfordjournals.org/
 - ix. Korean Journal of Music Therapy
www.musictherapy.or.kr/zeroboard/zboard.php?id=publications
 - x. Music Therapy Perspectives (American Music Therapy Association)
www.mtp.oxfordjournals.org/
 - xi. Music Therapy Today
www.wfmt.info/music-therapy-today/
 - xii. Music and Medicine
www.iammonline.com/page-1298867
 - xiii. Musiikkiterapia (Finnish Society for Music Therapy)
www.musiikkiterapia.net/index.php/component/hikashop/product/17-musiikkiterapia-lehti
 - xiv. Musikkterapi (Norwegian Music Therapy Association)
www.musikkterapi.no/hjem/
 - xv. Musikterapi i psykiatrien [Music Therapy in Psychiatry]
www.journals.aau.dk/index.php/MIPO
 - xvi. Musiktherapeutische Umschau (German Music Therapy Society)

- www.musiktherapie.de/index.php?id=7
 xvii. New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy
www.musictherapy.org.nz/journal/
 xviii. Nordic Journal of Music Therapy
www.tandfonline.com/loi/rnjm20#.VyBg4VYrJdg/

II. Unpublished Dissertations and Conference Proceedings

- a. Music therapy research can also be found in unpublished dissertations at the institutions where music therapy education is provided. To find such dissertations, use online search engines such as ProQuest Digital Dissertations, or contact libraries at local music therapy educational institutions.
- b. Research that has not yet been published is often presented at many national and international music therapy conferences and congresses, which take place in regions around the world on a regular basis. Published conference proceedings and programs from conferences can contain examples of music therapy research studies. (The proceedings of the last two World Congresses of Music Therapy (2011, 2014) are available here: www.wfmt.info/music-therapy-today/past-issues/). For more information about conference events in your local region, go to information on the website for the World Federation of Music Therapy which lists recent and forthcoming conferences (see www.wfmt.info/WFMT/Global_Calendar.html).

Which types of research can be applied in Music Therapy?

According to Wheeler (2014) "There are different levels and types of research, and different levels are appropriate at different points in the development of music therapy in a country. However, some type of music therapy research is important for the development of music therapy in all cases and in all situations and all countries. The author suggests that music therapy research may be used to: (a) describe a situation, (b) identify and examine processes and causal factors, (c) provide evidence about outcomes, or (d) change a situation." (p.1)

What is a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)?

Music therapy research has grown and changed over the years. According to Barbara Wheeler (2005), "The methods of music therapy research are generally part of a larger conception of research with particular adaptations to the needs of music and music therapy. Many were developed by researchers in the social sciences, including psychology, education and sociology. Some are used by researchers in the physical sciences such as biology, and chemistry, while others have been developed by music and music psychology researchers". (p.20) In the last years, the term RCT has become very popular and powerful in today's health system. In RCT-research (Randomized Controlled Trial), people are randomized to receive one of several clinical interventions. This can be applied to one or more treatment groups. In music therapy research, a RCT represents one way to contribute important knowledge to our field and evidence regarding music therapy treatment efficacy and effectiveness.

References

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