

MUSIC IN PEDIATRIC HEALTH SERVICES

Current Practice in Italian Pediatric Hospitals

Stefania Capasso^{1,2}, Marta Cervo^{1,3}, Laura Baroni^{1,3}

¹ PPT ² Local Health Service ASL TO3, Turin, Italy ³ Meyer Children's Hospital Florence, Italy

BACKGROUND

Evidence indicates that music-based interventions in pediatric health service contexts such as neonatology, oncology, neurorehabilitation and mental health care contribute to reduction of pain and anxiety, regulation of vital parameters, improvement of motor and cognitive skills, and enhancement of psychological wellbeing in both children and caregivers^{1,2}.

The American Music Therapy Association defines music therapy as a clinical and evidence-based use of music to accomplish individualized therapeutic goals³.

Systematic reviews show that music-based therapies improve both mental and physical outcomes in children and adolescents, with active interventions such as singing, listening to and playing instruments⁴.

In Neonatal Care there are significant benefits, including reduction of heart and respiratory rate, improved sleep and feeding behaviors, decreased parental anxiety, and shorter hospitalization⁵.

OBJECTIVES

To investigate the current use of music in Italian pediatric hospitals and to provide a descriptive overview supporting future integration of music-based interventions.

METHODS

The study was conducted in three phases: (1) review of scientific literature on the use of music in pediatric hospitals and rehabilitation services; (2) implementation of a survey addressed to Italian pediatric hospitals on the use of music in their services with the development of a specific questionnaire; (3) descriptive analysis of collected data.

RESULTS

Fifteen out of sixteen Italian pediatric hospitals enrolled in the survey completed the questionnaire. Respondents were mainly rehabilitation therapists (66,7%) and certified music therapists (25%). Only three hospitals reported no use of music.

Music was most frequently used in pediatric oncology units (58,3%), neonatal intensive care units (50%), and surgical wards (41,7%). Interventions were predominantly individual (83,3%)

Primary aims included emotional support and play activities (75%), sensory stimulation (66,7%), and support to rehabilitation, distraction, and pain reduction during procedures (58,3%). Interventions were delivered daily or weekly. Half of the staff (50%) reported no specific training, although all recognized its importance. Music was often integrated with physiotherapy, psychological support, nursing care, and psychomotor activities. The main barrier identified was the lack of specific education and training in the use of music in pediatric hospital environments-by the staff involved.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides an updated overview of use of music in Italian pediatric hospitals. Findings confirm existing evidence in literature on the practice of integrating music into clinical interventions and other hospital activities and highlight the need for specific training by specialized professionals to support the hospital staff involved in the direct care of the children.

REFERENCES

1. Stegemann T. et al. (2019). *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, 7:279.
2. Bieleninik Ł. et al. (2023). *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 65(4), 478–490.
3. American Music Therapy Association (2023). *Music Therapy in Pediatric Medical Care*.
4. Raglio A., Gianelli M. (2022). *Journal of Integrative Neuroscience*, 21(3), 86–97.
5. Haslbeck F.B., Bassler D. (2020). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11:1234.