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# The Self-Reported Attitudes And Awareness Of Nurse Practitioners Towards Music Therapy

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Running head: NURSE PRACTITIONERS TOWARDS MUSIC THERAPY

**THE SELF-REPORTED ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS OF  
NURSE PRACTITIONERS TOWARDS MUSIC THERAPY**

**Honors Thesis**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing**

In the School of Nursing  
At Salem State University

By

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### Abstract

This study takes the anonymous report of nurse practitioners' view of music therapy in adjunction with regular pharmacological care among Salem State nursing faculty who currently practice as a nurse practitioner. The study aims to gather awareness and attitudes of nurse practitioners toward using music therapy in their area of practice. There is a growing problem of prescription drug abuse that is sweeping the nation. One factor of this is the use of extremely strong and addictive pain medication used for overall healthy patients after postoperative surgery. Using music therapy in adjunction to pharmacological care helps patients deal with all the same problems of surgery like pain, anxiety, and worry while leaving out the harsh addictive qualities of only using pharmacologic medications. The study will involve an anonymous survey of questions addressing current practice habits of nurse practitioners among Salem State nursing faculty who are nurse practitioners, their level of awareness of music therapy, their personal attitudes towards music therapy as a complimentary alternative pain management approach. Additionally, I will seek to understand levels of attitudes towards music therapy in relationship to reported practice behavior.

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In America today there is a growing opioid epidemic. One issue that is leading to this growing epidemic falls under doctors and nurse practitioners over prescribing pharmacological medications to their patients. Patients may be given opioids that are too strong or may have a supply that last too long to manage their pain. This dependence on the medication prescribed can lead to use even after the actual pain has stopped. Patients affected by this trend can have chronic illnesses. Healthy people with an acute accident like a broken leg can likewise become addicted to the prescription analgesic, pain medicine. This happens all too much in this day and age to patients of all ages. One consideration that could be implemented more often is the adjunction of music therapy with pharmacological medicines.

Music therapy has a wide range positive attributes that can help benefit patients across the hospital setting. Music therapy is known as a “Controlled use of music, its elements, and their influences on the human being to aid in the physiological, psychological, and emotional integration of the individual” (Drury, Leow, & Poon, 2010, p. 344). Music therapy is also defined as “... a branch of health care where music is used in various physical, functional, psychological, and educational setting to help treat the physiological and psychological effects of a disease or infirmity” (Kale et al., 2015, p.44). Using music therapy to enhance the patient’s experience can be as easy as listening to music, singing, analyzing and discussion, and music making (Drury et al., 2010). Another benefit to music therapy is that the administration and usage are not expensive and have no side effects to worry about as with using analgesic medications (Kale et al.,

2015). On the medical side, music therapy has "...a beneficial effect on a patient's perceived pain, relaxation, respiratory rate, self-reported anxiety level, and the amount of analgesia required for effective pain management." (Comeaux T., & Steele-Moses S., 2013, p.314). With all of this, nurse practitioners play a crucial role in the future of medication distribution.

Nurse practitioners are appearing more and more in healthcare. Not to mention a nurse practitioner's credibility in doing more than just health care but also being mentors, educators, researchers, and administrators while having lower health-care costs. This shows the focus of nurse practitioners because this area of the health field will only grow in the future. There is research lacking regarding whether nurse practitioners are equipped with the knowledge of complementary medicines like music therapy to be used in adjunction with pharmacological medicine. Research also lacks information regarding the frequency with which nurse practitioners prescribe complimentary medicines like music therapy and their awareness of its helpfulness.

### Background

According to Manworren and Gilson (2015), there is a growing epidemic of prescribed medication abuse rising in the United States that could benefit from music therapy. The problem now is patients are being discharged from the hospital with prescriptions for very addictive medications to help with their pain. Not only is this dependence unhealthy but also it allows access for family and friends to try said prescription medication and also become dependent. Music therapy can offer patients an alternative and/or complimentary pain management approach, which also can have benefits to reduce stress and anxiety. Music therapy may lead to less addictive

dependence on prescriptive pain medications, thus reducing the growing epidemic of prescription medication abuse.

### Literature Review

For the research, the search engine CINAHL plus was used. Before searching the database the search was narrowed down for research articles only from 2007 to 2017 to ensure the data's relevance. The research articles also had to be in English, scholarly articles, and must have been peer reviewed. Key words used in the search engine included *music therapy*, *music therapy in the clinical setting*, *music therapy instead of pain medication*, and *music therapy in adjunction with pharmacological medicine*. Articles chosen had a focus of music therapy being used in any area of the clinical setting and tested the effectiveness of music therapy with an experiment or a literature review. Exclusion criteria included any research articles about music therapy published before 2007 and not published in English. This search produced seven sources of information.

Chang and colleagues (2015) developed a study aimed at evaluating the effects of music therapy on nursing students with depressed mood. After analyzing the students in a music group and control group, the results showed student's depression levels after receiving music therapy were significantly reduced compared to the control group.

Researchers Chen, Hsieh, and Hsu (2016) proposed music could have an impact on a burn patient's pain and anxiety at dressing change time. Pain and anxiety was measured before, during, and after dressing changes for a control and experimental group of 35 patients with the music intervention group reporting decrease pain before, during, and after dressing changes and anxiety decreasing during and after dressing changes.

Comeaux and Steele-Moses (2013) speculated if music therapy could be an effective

adjunction to decrease anxiety and increase pain management and environmental noise for the postoperative patient. Their research showed music therapy decreased pain and environmental noise felt by the postoperative patients with no effect on anxiety. Drury and colleagues (2010) theorized patient's experiences, expectations, and perceptions of music therapy in an inpatient hospice. The study showed music therapy aided the physical, psychological, and social needs of the hospice patient.

Kale and researchers (2015) speculated the effectiveness of music therapy on pain, anxiety, and patient satisfaction in patients from an emergency department in Turkey. The study separated 200 patients into a control and intervention group that answered a questionnaire to measure the level of pain perceived by the patient. The results showed a majority of the intervention group had a positive effect of music therapy for their pain and anxiety level than the control group. Kankkunen and colleagues (2011) tested the effects of music therapy on blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate on operation day, and on the first, second, and third postoperative days in abdominal surgery patients. This study comparing a music and control group showed respiratory rate and systolic blood pressure was reduced on the first and second postoperative days for patients in the music group. Researchers Manworren and Gilson (2015) indicated a need to inform nurses the magnitude of opioid diversion, the nonmedical use of opioids, and opioids' inappropriate disposal. The researchers theorized three interventions that involved nurses teaching patients about the risks of opioid diversion, providing patients with information on the safekeeping and proper disposal of opioids, and tracking patients' analgesic use to improve our knowledge of prescription analgesic requirements for pain.

### Study

This study took the anonymous report of nurse practitioners' view of music therapy in adjunction with regular pharmacological care among Salem State nursing faculty who currently practice as a nurse practitioner. The study aims to gather awareness and attitudes of nurse practitioners toward using music therapy in their area of practice. There is a growing problem of prescription drug abuse that is sweeping the nation. One factor of this is the prescription of extremely strong and addictive pain medication for overall healthy patients during postoperative care. Using music therapy in adjunction to pharmacological care helps patients deal with all the same problems of surgery like pain, anxiety, and worry while leaving out the harsh addictive qualities of only using pharmacologic medications. The study involved an anonymous survey of questions addressing current practice habits of nurse practitioners among Salem State nursing faculty who are nurse practitioners, their level of awareness of music therapy, and their personal attitudes towards music therapy as a complimentary alternative pain management approach. Additionally, I will seek to understand levels of attitudes towards music therapy in relationship to reported practice behavior.

A cross-sectional survey method was used. The targeted study population was Salem State University Nursing faculty who holds the nurse practitioner credential as well as currently practice as a nurse practitioner providing care to patients. The survey will be administered electronically through the SSU nursing faculty and adjunct faculty

list-serv. Data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Institutional Review Board approval has been obtained from Salem State University.

### Methods

To assess the self reported attitudes and awareness of nurse practitioners towards music therapy, a sixteen-question survey was created. Questions one through eight gathered demographic data from the respondents including age, gender, status of their nurse practitioner license (active or inactive) at the time of participation; if they were currently practicing at the time, how many years of practice they had as a nurse practitioner; what their highest level of education was; the type of nurse practitioner credential they held, and what type of clinical setting they practiced in. Questions nine through sixteen used multiple-choice questions answered using the responses of ‘Strongly Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Neutral/Do Not Know’, ‘Agree’, and ‘Strongly Agree’.

The questions asked participants based on their experience as a nurse practitioner if they thought music therapy could improve a person’s daily functioning; if music therapy could enhance a person’s ability to cope with illness; if music therapy could be used to improve emotional health; if music therapy could be used to help tolerate pain; if music therapy could be used to enhance spirituality; if they believed music therapy could be used as a complimentary or alternative pain management approach versus using only prescriptive medications; if in their practice as an nurse practitioner they have talked to their patients about music therapy; and if they believe music therapy could be one approach that could reduce patient dependence on prescriptive pain medication.

### Results

According to the data collected from the survey for nurse practitioners who taught at Salem State, four anonymous responses were analyzed. The recipients who responded were fifty-nine, thirty-eight, thirty, and fifty-nine years old when taking this survey. All the participants in this survey noted they are female. All the participants in this survey noted they have an active nurse practitioner license. For the next question of if they are currently practicing as a nurse practitioner, three responded yes and one responded no. For the question of how many years each practiced as a nurse practitioner is left as a fill in answer with participants responding ten, nine, four, and thirty years. The following question asked participants their highest level of education with the option of Master's or Post-Master's and resulted with two having a Master's and two having a Post-Master's. When asked what type of nurse practitioner credential they held one participant responded for Family Health nurse practitioner and three have an Adult Health nurse practitioner credential. The following asked what type of setting they currently worked in with one working in a community health center, one in a primary care center, one in acute care-Adult Health, and one participant not responding. The next question started the second half of the survey where the questions are multiple choice with options ranging from 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral/Do Not Know', 'Agree', and 'Strongly Agree'. The first question of this section asked if music therapy could be used to improve a person's daily functioning with one participant choose 'Strongly Disagree', one chose 'Neutral/Do Not Know', and two for 'Agree'.

**Music Therapy can be used to Improve a Person's Daily Functioning**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	2	50.0	50.0	50.0
Neutral/Do not know	1	25.0	25.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The following question asked the participants if they thought music therapy could be used to enhance a person's ability to cope with illness with one picking 'Strongly Disagree', two picking 'Neutral/Do Not Know', and two picking 'Agree'.

**Music Therapy can be used to Enhance a Person's Ability to Cope with Illness**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	2	50.0	50.0	50.0
Neutral/Do Not Know	1	25.0	25.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The next question asked participants if they though music therapy could be used to improve emotional health with one picking 'Strongly Disagree', two picking 'Neutral/Do Not Know' and one picking 'Agree'.

**Music Therapy can be used to Improve Emotional Health**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	1	25.0	25.0	25.0
Neutral/Do Not Know	2	50.0	50.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The following question asked participants if music therapy could be used to help tolerate pain with one picking 'Strongly Disagree', one picking 'Neutral/Do Not Know', and two picking 'Agree'.

**Music Therapy can be used to Help Tolerate Pain**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	2	50.0	50.0	50.0
Neutral/Do Not Know	1	25.0	25.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The next question asked if music therapy could be used to enhance spirituality with one picking 'Strongly Disagree', one picking 'Neutral/Do Not Know', and two picking 'Agree'.

**Music Therapy can be used to Enhance Spirituality**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	2	50.0	50.0	50.0
Neutral/ Do Not Know	1	25.0	25.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The following question asked if they believed music therapy could be used as a complimentary or alternative pain management approach versus using only prescriptive medications with one picking ‘Strongly Disagree’, two picking ‘Neutral/Do Not Know’, and one picking ‘Agree’.

**I Believe that Music Therapy can be used as a Complimentary or Alternative Pain Management approach versus using only Prescriptive Medications**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	1	25.0	25.0	25.0
Neutral/Do Not Know	2	50.0	50.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The next question asked in their practice as a nurse practitioner they have talked to their patients about music therapy with two picking ‘Strongly Disagree’, one picking ‘Disagree’, and one picking ‘Agree’.

### **In my Practice as an NP, I have Talked with my Patients about Music Therapy**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	1	25.0	25.0	25.0
Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	50.0
Strongly Disagree	2	50.0	50.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The last question asked participants in their practice as a nurse practitioner if they believe that music therapy can be one approach that could reduce patient dependence on prescriptive pain medication with one picking ‘Strongly Disagree’, two picking ‘Neutral/Do Not Know’, and one picking ‘Agree’.

### **In my Practice as an NP, I Believe that Music Therapy can be one approach that could Reduce Patient Dependence on Prescriptive Pain Medication**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	1	25.0	25.0	25.0
Neutral/Do Not Know	2	50.0	50.0	75.0
Strongly Disagree	1	25.0	25.0	
Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

### Discussion

The first question asking the participant’s age shows a diverse range of maturity among these nurse practitioners that engaged in the survey. This range may distinguish their perception of music therapy’s usefulness. The answers in the following questions have a decrease in variability due to each respondent being female and having an active nurse practitioner license. The next question demonstrates a decrease in variability of current clinical experience with three responding they are currently practicing as a nurse practitioner and one not currently practicing. The results gathered greatly benefited from

most nurse practitioners having patient contact. Question five contains significant data revealing a diverse amount of years practiced by each participant and how the experience level influenced their answers. Another piece of significant data came from questions nine, ten, twelve, and thirteen resulting in two of the four participants picking 'Agree', participants believed music therapy is useful for improving daily functioning, coping with illness, tolerating pain, and enhancing spirituality. Question fifteen asked if they have talked to their patients about music therapy; two participants chose 'Strongly Disagree' and one chose 'Disagree' demonstrating that although nurse practitioners agree music therapy can be useful, they disregard it in their own clinical practice.

#### Limitations

The principle limitation for this study was the number of participants. Having more participants could have shown a trend with the data about how their backgrounds could have corresponded with their attitudes and awareness of music therapy. This survey was also only sent to nurse practitioners that are working in or are closely associated with Salem State University. For this reason the study doesn't yield the global diversity of results that could have come if the survey had been sent out to different hospitals in the area, or other states, or other countries and therefore cannot be generalized to the public population.

#### Conclusion

Although it seems nurse practitioners know a little about music therapy and the benefits it can have for patients, it seems there is room for improvement in education of music therapy and improvement of music therapy to make it a more desirable tool for nurse practitioners to use. Overall, the awareness and attitudes of music therapy will only

improve with more studies and research done on the benefits of utilizing this tool more often.

Future research may support the findings of this study. It is apparent with the results of this study nurse practitioners may know about music therapy but not its application in the health field. Nursing education may want to consider including music therapy and its success in adjunction with other therapies. It makes sense to not prescribe something you have no expertise in. It is also appropriate to only prescribe therapies with evidence-based research of its effectiveness. More research done on music therapy's success in the health field would make this a more desirable therapy for nurse practitioners to use in their practice confidently.

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