

Palliative Care: Supportive Therapies

The daily life of a patient in palliative care can be enhanced by supportive therapies that can provide relief from the discomfort and anxiety the patient may be experiencing. Examples of supportive therapies are Art therapy, Counseling, Music Therapy, Hydrotherapy, Pet Therapy, Spiritual care and Personal Journaling. These therapies can work powerfully to improve the patient's physical and emotional well-being and their quality of life. Let's take a closer look at the benefits of music therapy.

“Joy, sorrow, tears, lamentation, laughter - to all these music gives voice. But in such a way that we are transported from the world of unrest to a world of peace, and see reality in a new light.” Albert Schweitzer (Theologian, Physician and Musical Philosopher)

Music Therapy

Throughout our lives sound impacts our emotional and physical wellbeing. From a mother's lullaby to a birdcall, from the snappy sounds of Jazz to a classical concerto - sounds move us. Positive and calming sounds can impact our physical state by lowering blood pressure, slowing heart rate and increasing endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Research shows that sound is one of the first 'outside sensations' that a newborn responds to and it is one of the last senses a dying patient experiences. Music provides a deeply personal form of self-expression. It can provide a vehicle for a patient to share their feelings with loved ones, where words alone can fail.

How music therapy can improve a palliative patient's quality of life.

1. It can ease depression, isolation and loneliness. Facilitated by a Music therapist, patients can share much loved music with friends and family.
2. It can soothe feelings of anger and agitation.
3. It can reduce fear and anxiety.
4. It can provide a platform for patients to identify and express their emotions and thereby open communication between patients and their support team.
5. It can allow the patient to reminisce about different times in their past, and can encourage them to honour their accomplishments and heal past conflicts.
6. It can help with pain management (research shows that music that reduces anxiety can also result in reducing pain medications).
7. It can ease respiratory distress and relax tense muscles.
8. Music is often profoundly important in supporting grieving relatives. They are grateful for anything that brings comfort or beauty to their dying loved one.
9. Music can be incorporated in Spiritual and Cultural needs of the patient and their families.
10. Being able to participate in a musical activity often improves self-esteem and adds a feeling of normalcy to a palliative patient's day.
11. Music may act as a catalyst - allowing patients to openly discussion their death and share their deepest wishes.
12. By instilling a sense of calm, patients sometimes describe a sense of clarity in their thought process that helps them come to terms with the reality of dying.
13. Music can help comfort a patient undergoing difficult procedures.
14. Music is often profoundly important in supporting grieving relatives. They are grateful for anything that brings comfort or beauty to their dying loved one.
15. It can be incorporated into the spiritual and cultural needs of the patient and their family. Patients express they feel a sense of control over their daily life when they have control over the choice of music they listen to.
16. Being able to participate in a musical activity often improves self-esteem and adds a feeling of normalcy to a palliative patient's day.
17. Music can be the catalyst that allows a patient to open a discussion about their death and share their deepest wishes.