

Differential effects of preferred music and relaxation music on anxiety in older people

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Introduction: The effects of music therapy on moods and feelings in people have been extensively studied. Different people have different preferences for music, probably depending on their lifestyle or previous music experiences. In a clinical setting, if relaxation music is presented to people who do not prefer the music, the music might produce unfavorable outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to know the differential effects of preferred music and relaxation music on anxiety.

Objective: In this study, we investigated the psychological and physiological effects of preferred music and relaxation music in older people.

Methods: Anxiety levels and physiological markers were measured using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and an acceleration plethysmography device (Artett C, U-Medica Inc., Japan), respectively. One-hundred fifteen healthy volunteers between the ages of 58 and 87 years (80 females and 35 males; mean \pm SD = 70.0 \pm 6.1 years) were matched for age and sex and then randomly assigned to one of three groups; control group, preferred music group, and relaxation music group. The preferred music group listened to their preferred music after being given a stress load, while the relaxation music group listened to a piece of music which was considered to have relaxation effects.

Results: We found a significant decrease in anxiety levels in the preferred music group compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$), while no significant difference was found between the relaxation music group and the controls. There were no significant correlations between anxiety levels and physiological markers.

Conclusion: Preferred music was more effective than relaxation music in decreasing anxiety levels in older people. The results suggest that therapists should carefully consider which music is presented to the elderly.

Contribution to the practice: For those who can not express their feelings well, such as patients with dementia, their preference for music should be investigated from acquaintances including family members before music therapy is applied.