

Participation of People with Dementia in Musical Activities: Experiences from Occupational Therapy Practice

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Introduction: Literature identifies a great need of interventions supporting participation for people with dementia, highlighting creative methods such as music as one possible form of intervention. The focus of this project is to develop knowledge on therapeutic components in music as intervention among persons living with dementia. **Objective:** To explore the experience of participating in an Occupational Therapy intervention based on musical activities. **Method:** A "Musical activities workshop" was developed in seven sessions at a home of a 63 years old woman diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Sessions were performed once a week; each session being 45 minutes to one hour. Three OT students participated in the sessions together with the old woman and two of her caregivers, her niece and daughter. Participants explored different musical activities (singing, dancing and playing instruments). For data collection, participant observation, video taped sessions and open interviews was used. Data analysis was carried out by means of narrative methods. **Results:** Data analysis showed two main categories: Enacting music and Communion, interacting in a process of constant feedback with six subcategories: to acquire competence, recognition of new forms, engaging in a leisure activity, integration and collective flow, the story telling as a means of union and shifting roles. **Conclusions:** Perception of capacity experienced by participants in a musical event generated a sense of self-confidence and mastery, involving themselves more actively in the activities. To participate in a musical activity allows creating a sense of validation, which can be a source of personal gratification and external recognition. Participation of the person with dementia and her caregivers, impacts positively on their occupational performance. Musical activity acts as a meeting point between the past experiences of the person and her actual situation. **Contribution to the practice base of occupational therapy:** Musical activity might act as an element of reminiscence and facilitator of communication between persons with dementia and caregivers. That may be used as a therapeutic element in the practice of occupational therapy in people with dementia.