Can Music Therapy Benefit People with Schizophrenia?

June 28, 2017

Music therapy is a clinical technique used by trained therapists to encourage individuals to cope with physical, emotional, mental and social challenges. Now, findings published in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews show that patients with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like disorders may derive significant short- and long-term benefits from this novel treatment if added to the standard care doctors use to treat these mental illnesses, reports Medscape.

For the assessment, scientists at the Greig Academy Music Therapy Research Centre in Norway reviewed the literature for 18 randomized controlled trials that compared music therapy with standard care, placebo therapy or no treatment. The trials lasted between 1 to 6 months and included 1,215 participants. Studies looked at the short-term (1 to 1.5 months), medium-term (3 to 4 months) and long-term effects (6 to 9 months) of music therapy.

Researchers found that depending on the number of sessions and whether the treatment was given in high or low doses, music therapy improved the global and mental states (general mindset and symptoms such as lethargy and social withdrawal), social functioning and the quality of life of people with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like disorders during short and medium periods of time. (Scientists reported that at least 20 sessions might be required to achieve significant positive clinical effects that varied from person to person.)

“It clearly takes time for the effects of music therapy to unfold,” wrote the study’s authors. “This can be seen not only from the tendency of effects to increase over time but also from examining the numbers of sessions provided in each of the studies. The strongest effects were found in studies that provided long-term, high-frequency music therapy.”

In conclusion, scientists suggested that more research must be conducted to confirm the long-term effects of music therapy, the number of treatments required for specific outcomes and the ramifications of treatments delivered outside of hospital settings.

Click here to learn how aerobic exercise can help treat schizophrenia symptoms.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.