

Vocal music therapy for chronic pain management

Joke Bradt

Chronic pain often results in despair, depression, and social isolation and loneliness. It is well recognized that a biopsychosocial approach is needed for effective chronic pain management. Yet, traditional pain treatments continue to heavily rely on pharmacological interventions and invasive medical procedures even though numerous meta-analyses have indicated that such treatments bring relief to only a small percentage of people. Moreover, research suggests that these treatments may decrease a person's quality of life because of side effects, addiction, complications, and increased disability.

This presentation will focus on how music therapy can help people with chronic pain move from a place of darkness and despair to a place of hope and empowerment. Specifically, this presentation will address how singing, vocal improvisation, and other voice-based strategies can help patients connect with their bodies in a positive way, enhance emotional expressivity, feel energized and motivated, and transform their being-in-the-world.

Although the conference theme, singing about the dark times, is envisioning the use of the arts as a form of resistance within a larger geopolitical reality, this presentation relates to the conference theme on a micro level. Through vocal music therapy, patients begin to take active part in their pain management and resist medical narratives that prioritize pharmacological and invasive procedural interventions. Through video segments of music therapy sessions, attendees will get a close-up look at the impact of music therapy interventions on people with chronic pain. Dr. Bradt will also present the results of several of her music therapy clinical trials with people with chronic pain. Finally, she will introduce attendees to an international research network, Music4Pain, funded by the National Center of Complementary and Integrative Health at the National Institutes of Health (USA). Music4Pain aims to build a network of multidisciplinary researchers to advance mechanistic understanding of music-based interventions for pain management.

Biography

Dr. Joke Bradt, PhD, MT-BC is Professor and Program Director of the PhD in Creative Arts Therapies program in the College of Nursing and Health Professions at Drexel University (Philadelphia, USA) and a board-certified music therapist. Her federally funded research is focused on the development and testing of music therapy interventions for chronic pain management. She is the lead author of several Cochrane systematic reviews on music interventions with medical patients. She is the former Editor-in-Chief of the *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*. Dr. Bradt is the founding Co-Director of the International Music Therapy Clinical Trials Network (IMTCTnet) and she leads the Music4Pain Network, an NIH-funded multidisciplinary research network aimed at advancing mechanistic understanding of music-based interventions for pain.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Bradt, J., Leader, A., Worster, B., Zhang, F., Myers-Coffman, K., Schneible, B., Bryl, K., Biondo, J., Cottone, C., Selvan, P., Low, M. Y., Lacson, C., Cephas, A., Millstein, A., & Sofield, S. (2023). **Interactive music therapy for chronic pain management in people with advanced cancer: A mechanistic study.** *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 41(16_suppl), e24119-e24119.

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Fitzpatrick, K., Moss, H., Bradt, J., Clements-Cortés, A., Corcoran, J., Gallagher, L.M, Guétin, S., Harmon, D., Hussey, C., Loewy, J., O'Shea, P. (2023). **An agenda for excellence:**

The role of music therapy for people living with chronic pain. *Music and Medicine*, 15(2), 68-76. <https://doi.org/10.47513/mmd.v15i2.925>

Low, M., Lacson, C., Zhang, F., Kesslick, A., & Bradt, J. (2020). **Vocal music therapy for chronic pain: A mixed methods feasibility study.** *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 26(2), 113-122. <https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2019.0249>

Bradt, J., Norris, M., Shim, M., Gracely, E. J., & Gerrity, P. (2016). **Vocal music therapy for chronic pain management in inner-city African Americans: A mixed methods feasibility study.** *Journal of Music Therapy*, 53(2), 178-206. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmt/thw004>.