



Singing, sharing, soothing
Family-centred music therapy
during painful procedures in neonatal care

av

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Abstract

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To sing is to communicate. The soothing, comforting and emotional regulating properties of a lullaby are well-known cross-culturally and historically. This doctoral thesis addresses neonatal pain management from a novel and groundbreaking perspective, studying the efficacy of live music therapy on infants' pain responses during venepuncture. New research is needed to advance the non-pharmacological interventions in neonatal pain care, and neonatal music therapy (NICU MT) offers active methods to involve the parents in pain management. The doctoral thesis includes two empirical and two theoretical articles. In paper I, preterm and term infants (n=38) were subjected to venepuncture with and without live lullaby singing, in a randomised order with a crossover design. Parent-preferred lullabies were performed live by a music therapy student and standard care was provided for all infants. The results did not show any significant pain-alleviating effects, however, the live singing was not stressful for the infants.

In paper II, the microanalysis disclosed that live lullaby singing is a communicative reciprocal intervention that also applies to premature infants during painful procedures. Live lullaby singing is a tool suitable as a means to optimise the homeostatic mechanisms. The results from the theoretical papers III and IV are further developed and synthesised in the thesis into a theoretical strategy; The Nordic NICU MT pain management strategy, featuring the parents and their singing voices as mediators for pain relief. The role of the music therapist in neonatal pain management is as a facilitator and an educator for the parents. Coaching parents to better meet their infant's attachment needs during a painful procedure may lead to more efficacious interventions. The biopsychosocial parental infant-directed singing is presumably an applicable parent-driven non-pharmacological intervention, which promotes pain relief and attachment formation during painful procedures. Neonatal music therapy is still in its infancy in the Nordic countries, but the societal and healthcare contexts afford important prerequisites to further develop NICU MT as a truly family-centred approach. This doctoral thesis will hopefully contribute to the important interdisciplinary endeavour worldwide of involving and integrating parents in neonatal pain management.

Keywords: music therapy, pain management, premature infants, family-centred, infant-directed singing, venepuncture, parents, dynamic forms of vitality.

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