THE IMPACT OF GROUP MUSIC THERAPY ON DEPRESSION AND COGNITION IN ELDERLY PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED STUDY

Kuei-Ru Chou
Graduate Institute of Nursing, College of Nursing, Taipei Medical University, Taipei, Taiwan
kueiru@tmu.edu.tw

Yu Lin
Graduate Institute of Nursing, College of Nursing, Taipei Medical University, Taipei, Taiwan
Department of Nursing, Kang-Ning Junior College of Medical Care and Management, Taipei, Taiwan
yulin@knjc.edu.tw

ABSTRACT

Objective. The study was to determine the effectiveness of group music therapy for improving depression and delaying the deterioration of cognitive functions in elderly persons with dementia. Methods. The study had a prospective, parallel-group design with permuted-block randomization. Older persons with dementia (N = 104) were randomly assigned to the experimental or control group. The experimental group received 12 sessions of group music therapy and the control group received usual care. Results. Group music therapy reduced depression in persons with dementia. Improvements in depression occurred immediately after music therapy and were apparent throughout the course of therapy. The cortisol level did not significantly decrease after the group music therapy. Cognitive function significantly improved slightly at the 6th session, the 12th session, and 1 month after the sessions; in particular, short-term recall function improved. The group music therapy intervention had the greatest impact in subjects with mild and moderate dementia. Conclusion. The group music intervention is a noninvasive and inexpensive therapy that appeared to reduce elders’ depression. It also delayed the deterioration of cognitive functions, particularly short-term recall function. Group music therapy may be an appropriate intervention among elderly persons with mild and moderate dementia.

Keywords: dementia; depression; elderly; cognitive function; therapy