

Country Feature

Music and Medicine in Spain: History and New Developments of a Growing DisciplineNuria Escudé Matamoros¹, Fabrizio Acanfora¹¹Catalan Institute of Music Therapy, University of Barcelona IL3, Barcelona, Spain.**Abstract**

The strong link between music and medicine has been documented in Spain since the 17th century, showing that the therapeutic effects of music have been known for centuries. The development of music therapy as a scientific, independent discipline on the Iberian Peninsula begins in the 1960s due to the pioneering work of Serafina Poch. Since then, the interest in music and medicine both by specialists and public has constantly increased. Nowadays, music therapy is taught in public universities and private institutions, and a growing number of health care and educational centers is implementing music therapy projects each year, producing also an increase in the research on the subject. A sore point, which we hope can be resolved soon, is that music therapy in Spain has not yet been recognized with an official title and as an independent profession, leading to fragmentation of the field and leaving the door open to professional intrusion.

Keywords: *music therapy, music medicine, Spain.*multilingual abstract | mmd.iamonline.com**History**

During the 17th and 18th century, in Europe there was a strong conviction that music could be deliberately used to modulate human feelings and emotions. The “doctrine of affections”, originated with Descartes and developed by other intellectuals of the time like the composer Johan Mattheson, claimed that a skillful use of intervals, harmony and rhetoric would be able to arouse or modify specific “passions” of the soul; passions, on the other hand, were directly associated with determined physiological symptoms, like heart or respiratory rate.

These ideas began to flourish also in 18th century Spain. According to Pilar León-Sanz[1] “*music played a key therapeutic role in sickness and health, in accordance with ideas that linked the practice of music to aesthetic and technical theory*”. Thus, following a widespread tendency across Europe, also Spanish researchers wrote extensively on the healing properties of music. The first and probably most influential medical treatise of the time in which we find a clear reference

to music therapy is the *Palestra Critico-Medica*, written in 1744 by the Cistercian monk Antonio José Rodríguez. In his work Rodríguez, besides criticizing the most common medical practices of his time, wrote about what he called “Yatro-Phonia o Medicina Música” (Discurso I, Volumen V), the application of music as a real therapeutic tool, especially for diseases of the nervous system. But it is only at the beginning of the 20th century that the word *Musicoterapia* (literally, music therapy) was used for the first time in Spain. It appeared in a book titled *La música como medio curativo de las enfermedades nerviosas: algunas consideraciones sobre la Musicoterapia* (Music as a therapeutic tool for neurological disorders: some considerations on Music Therapy), written by the Spanish physician Joaquín Candela Ardid in 1920. In his book, Ardid described his experience with the therapeutic use of music with psychiatric patients at the Sanatorio de la Encarnación, in Madrid.

A key moment for the birth of Music Therapy as an independent and professional discipline in Spain, arrived in the 1960s with Serafina Poch. Her pioneering work with music therapy began with a Ph.D. dissertation titled *Musicoterapia para niños autistas. Historia de la Musicoterapia* (Music Therapy for autistic children. History of Music Therapy), that she wrote after a period of training in the USA. Poch brought music therapy into Spanish hospitals, mental health care and special education institutions, and she founded the Spanish Association of Music Therapy (1976) as well as the Catalan Association of Music Therapy (1983), and directed the Spanish Journal of Music Therapy. The first Introductory Course to Music Therapy in Spain was taught in 1975 and, two years later, in 1977, the Spanish Association of Music Therapy

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International Association for Music & Medicine (IAMM).

organized the First National Symposium of Music Therapy in Madrid.

In the nineties, the interest in music therapy as a profession was increasingly growing, especially among those people who worked in special education, psychiatry or neurological rehabilitation. Public and private universities started Music Therapy programs and seminaries, and the newly trained professionals began their work with music therapy mostly in private health care and educational institutions.

Present

Music therapy as a profession

Currently, music therapy as a profession in Spain is not recognized with an official title as an independent profession by the Ministry of Labor [2]. There has been an attempt to regulate and officially register the profession of music therapist by creating the Asociación Española de Musicoterapeutas Profesionales (AEMP) in 2007. This association has been registered at the Ministry of Labor and Social Security with the purpose of regulating the academic, professional, ethical and research aspects of Music Therapy in Spain [3].

Despite the efforts, there persists a lack of unity in the music therapy field in Spain right now. Perhaps the reason resides in the differences within the training programs offered by the different universities and, as we already pointed out, in the non-recognition of the profession at an official level. However, according to Brotons, Sabbatella and Del Moral, *“there is still a long way to go before this discipline and profession becomes consolidated and integrated within the education and health systems, and recognised by the relevant authorities.”* [4]



Education

Music Therapy training programs in Spain can be at two different levels: Master's or Post-Graduate degree. There are no Bachelor's degree or doctoral programs in this discipline at the moment.

The first training courses were offered by private institutions (Asociación Música, Arte y Proceso in Vitoria-Gasteiz; Centro de Investigación Musicoterapéutica in Bilbao) in 1986 [5], and in 1992 the first music therapy program, directed by Dr. Serafina Poch, at the university of Barcelona began. Since then, many universities have begun to offer courses both directly orientated towards the profession of music therapist or that included music therapy as an optional subject.

There are many differences in the structure, duration, theoretical orientation and therapeutic methods amongst all the programs offered in Spanish universities [6], and this is probably a consequence of the lack of official recognition by the national government. It also appears that this fragmentation and lack of unifying criteria for an official definition of music therapy training and music therapists as professional figures leave the door open to professional intrusion.

Current applications and developments of music therapy in Spain

Music therapy in Spain is in continuous evolution. Since the foundation of the first association in 1976 (Asociación Española de Musicoterapia), the interest in our discipline has constantly increased and many public universities and private institutions have started offering training in music therapy at different levels. Nowadays there are at least 56 Music Therapy associations that work on the territory promoting conferences and congresses. In 1997 was created the Association of Professional Music Therapists (Asociación de Profesionales de Musicoterapia) with the purpose of gaining an official recognition and regulation of the profession and fighting against professional intrusion [7]. Another important step towards unification and the recognition of music therapy at official levels was done in 2014, with the creation of the Spanish Federation of Music Therapy Associations (FEAMT) whose mission is clearly directed at integrating a constantly increasing number of other associations with the desire of joining the efforts for gaining professional recognition and promoting research [8].

The number of Spanish hospitals and health care institutions that require music therapy is growing year by year. Music therapists are requested in geriatrics, special education institutions, palliative care and intensive care units. Many autonomous communities have implemented a number of projects that see the employ of music therapists at clinical level, contributing to develop and strengthen the idea of music

therapy as a scientific discipline and, at the same time, encouraging clinical research.

In the community of Madrid, for instance, music therapy programs are effective since 2010 at the palliative care unit of the Vianorte-Laguna Foundation. An interesting study has been carried out at the palliative care unit of San José Institute in Madrid, where researchers evaluated the impact of music therapy on caregivers. From the study emerges clearly that music therapy “*is highly valued by relatives and friends of the patients cared for in the PCU. Reported benefits include perception of support, relaxation, positive mood changes and facilitation of verbal and nonverbal communication*” [9].

At Santiago Hospital in Victoria-Gasteiz, music therapy is offered to patients admitted to the intensive care unit, with great appreciation from both patients and their families. At Marina Hospital in Valencia, music therapists already work in different clinical areas, from neurology to oncology, neonatology, hemodialysis and pain management.

At the Hospital del Mar in Barcelona, music therapy is offered to patients in the intensive care unit, sleep unit and palliative care. It is also active an innovative project of Home Care Music Therapy for patients dismissed by the hospital at the Paliaclic Foundation, offered by the Catalan Institute for Music Therapy. In the palliative care unit at the Hospital del Mar led by Dr. Josep Planas, has recently been conducted a quantitative study on the initiative of the director of the Master in Music Therapy of the University of Barcelona, Nuria Escudé. The research, based on EEG data, assesses the emotional response of terminally ill cancer patients to a music therapy intervention [10]. The study showed that “*music therapy in advanced cancer patients admitted to a PCU significantly improved well-being, anxiety and depression, and decreased symptomatology, compared with standard care only*”.

It is interesting to note that the increasing demand for music therapy, started in specific areas, has caused a positive contagion effect leading to the request for its application in many other clinical practice areas. In conclusion, despite the fragmentation and lack of official recognition, music therapy in Spain is a field in constant growth. The number of public and private health care and educational institutions that implement music therapy programs rises yearly, showing also an increasing awareness of the public in our discipline.

Spain is proud to be the host of the 5th conference of the IAMM (International Association for Music and Medicine). There will be features of the growth of music medicine and highlights of international growth in music therapy in medicine of interest to our international community. See you there!

More information:

<http://iamm2018barcelona.com/>



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Biographical Statements

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