

*Rounds Corner***Doctors Dabbling in Music Medicine**Patravoot Vatanasapt¹¹ *Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University, Thailand*

For the medical doctors, bringing music into medical profession is a blessing. While the patients gain their clinical benefits, the doctors fulfill their passion. They both also reach a mutual appreciation, and I am not an exception.

I was born to a family of medical profession. Although my father was a surgeon, he was also a violinist and a record collector. My mother bought me a record player when I was 4-years old and this kept music as an accompaniment my life since my early childhood.

I started private piano lessons when I was 6, and it later becomes my major instrument. My teenage life was full of music. I learned to play flute and saxophone for the marching band. I also played drums in the school big band, before joining friends to form a string combo for gigs in town. Aside from a formal music education, I learned a lot from the experience with the band on transcribing, arranging, and writing scores. My versatile music skills, which later became helpful in my music medicine practice, were profoundly developed before the era of Karaoke, when I frequently had to perform at parties to spontaneously accompany the guests who requested to sing their songs. These guests ranged from professional singers to participants who had no training, and sang out of tune. This is, in part, how I learned to be receptive in performing music.

I was so fond of music that I almost gave up my first year of medical school. However, I decided to pursue the medical school while doing the music in parallel, with a hope that one day, I could bring music to blend with my medical profession. Although I trained in otolaryngology and ended up specializing in head and neck surgery, my journey in music has never ended. My exposure to music therapy began during my time in the US for studying cancer epidemiology at Harvard School of Public Health. It was Suzanne Hanser, the founding head of the Department of Music Therapy at Berklee College of Music and Joanne Loewy, the founding director of The Louis Armstrong Center for Music and Medicine, who allowed me to visit their institutions and

inspired me with their wonderful work. After I returned to Thailand, I started to apply music in my practice with cancer patients, most particularly for those with laryngeal cancer who were undergoing total laryngectomies. The program called “Art 4’MEE” was developed, where music and arts are integrated with a comprehensive rehabilitation program, to regain the quality of life for the patients.

The big door of opportunity opened again when Joanne Loewy, in 2009, along with her colleagues around the world initiated the idea to establish the International Association for Music and Medicine (IAMM), and I was invited to be a part of it as a founding member. It is a community full of knowledge, experience, and passion on using music in medicine of colleagues around the world. What I learned from IAMM enlighten me about lots of ideas on using music in my practice, including “Tracheomelodica”, my invention which applying melodica for pulmonary rehabilitation of the laryngectomized patients [1].

My later work that has become a favorite part of my job is applying music to teach medical students. The idea was a result of my conducting an interactive music session for the medical students where I noticed they were eager to connect their learning experience to their daily life and clinical practice. I later developed the program to have the students learn through various music activities using a contemplative education approach. I aimed to develop and enhance their non-technical skills for their medical professional training, and to support for their stress management. The program facilitates the students to learn to be aware, to listen, to feel, to empathize, to collaborate, and to communicate effectively by using an analogy of music experiences. One of my biggest prides, is the program provided in recent years for the medical students of the Princess of Naradhiwas University as part of their preparation before working at the unrest areas of the southernmost of Thailand.

The scientific evidence has been convincing for using music in medicine. But for me, it is beyond that academic rationale. Music, like nothing else, gets me thinking, feeling, and moving at the same time. It can influence the inners to the outers, from individuals to populations. What happens in the brain is more profound than we can ever think of, and deeper than today’s current technology can ever thoroughly measure. If you are a medical professional and happen to spend some time reviewing your routine clinical work and find some gaps, or areas needed for improvement, sing some songs, or play

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Patravoot Vatanasapt, MD, E-mail: patvat@kku.ac.th | COI statement: The author declared that no financial support was given for the writing of this article. The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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International Association for Music & Medicine (IAMM).

some music; then you will find a way to incorporate music into your practice.

Reference

1. Vatanasapt P, Chabnak N, Punya-ek N. Tracheomelodica: A Musical Device for Improving the Pulmonary Function of Laryngectomized Patients. *Music and Medicine*. 2015; 7(3): 8-13.

Biographical Statement

Patravoot Vatanasapt is a former Head of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University. He is a founding member of the International Association for Music and Medicine, and currently the President.