

CONFERENCE REPORT

Sixth conference of the International Association for Music and Medicine

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CONFERENCE DETAILS

Sixth conference of the International Association for Music and Medicine
30th – 31st May 2020, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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The International Association for Music & Medicine (IAMM) is a registered non-profit organisation formed in 2009 to encourage and support the use of music in medical contexts including research into the benefits of music, and its specialised applications in healthcare.

Under Patravoot Vatanasapt's presidency the conference was organised by the Berklee College of Music, Boston University in collaboration with the IAMM. It was chaired by Suzanne Hanser, Professor and Chair Emerita of the Music Therapy Program at Berklee College of Music and Vera Brandes who chaired the scientific committee. The event was hosted in an online format due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In the light of the circumstances, the organisers reframed the conference in a novel format, which reflected their tremendous effort and creativity to successfully provide a high-quality online event to the international community.

The purpose of the conference was to bring together scholars from a variety of countries and disciplines across the globe to promote discussion on cross-cutting issues regarding the use of both music and music therapy interventions in the medical context. Throughout the presentations, the speakers looked at the processes involved in such interventions, discussed study designs for research in the field, shared information and approaches to key challenges, disseminated existing data sources, and fostered the development of new sources of music and music therapy interventions grounded on past research findings around the world. Physicians, surgeons, musicians, music therapists, composers and researchers in the field of music contributed through remarkable panels, special interest groups, papers and posters. Panels and special interest groups facilitated discussions and there was an emergence of new, revised and integrated agendas for research and clinical work with experts in the field of music and medicine. Participants presented results through papers and posters from a variety of population-based studies conducted in both developed and developing countries.

Lectures revealed several areas of intersection between musicians, scientists, physicians, and music therapists around the use of music in medical contexts.

The highlighted themes discussed were: music therapy in response to COVID-19; music adaptations for diverse physical conditions; applied technology; therapeutic music; the use of the voice for healing; the acoustic intelligence of ecosystems; frequencies and their impact on the emotional field; musicians' health; trauma; critical care; cardiac care; movement disorders; music therapy and premature babies; dementia and end of life care; as well as opportunities for research in the field of music-sound health.

The panel on 'Finding harmony: The music response to COVID-19', moderated by Brian Jantz, with presentations by Tian Gao, J. Todd Frazier, Jennifer Townsend, Seneca Block, Mark Fuller and Hannah Foxman, introduced innovative alternatives to provide access to music therapy care. The audience gained insight into how the presenters' work changed in response to the pandemic situation. The presenters talked about the stages they went through in creating new ways to deliver music therapy interventions such as using new materials, applications, and methods as they transitioned to telehealth. In addition, they discussed protocols for one-to-one sessions, services for staff and projects with community musicians working in collaboration with music therapy departments.

Outstanding presentations on the outcomes of implementing applied technology for people with physically challenged conditions to facilitate their access to music making brought awareness to the need to revisit the concept of 'physical limitation' and to broaden understandings of diversity. Violinist Adrian Anantawan caught the audience's attention with his own inspiring life story of finding creative strategies to overcome a physically challenging condition by, for example, adapting a violin to make music with a high level of expertise. Tod Machover shared his fascinating and innovative developments for new music technologies including hyperinstruments, robotic operas, a device that turns the voice into vibration and software that allows people with a range of abilities to compose. He invited the audience to train the interdisciplinary multisensory musical doctors of the future. David Monacchi presented his work on the sonosphere and the acoustic intelligence of ecosystems. By sharing his journey on the study of sound intelligence, the organised sounds of nature and biodiversity (independent of humans as composers), he raised awareness of the need for taking action to protect nature that is quickly disappearing. He brought the provocative thought of the potential connection of the sonosphere with healing by building a space for people to experience the soundscape of ecosystems in 3D. Sunil Iyengar presented on research opportunities and the numerous studies supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (US) such as: music for surgical pain management, autism and family wellbeing, opioid use prevention, adolescence brain development, building resilience among critical care health professionals and social and emotional wellbeing in the context of mild cognitive impairment.

The panel on 'The future of music and medicine', moderated by Fred Schwartz with presentations by Melissa Mercadal-Brotons, Patravoot Vatanasapt and Robert Saper, highlighted aspects of the future of the field for the benefit of mankind. Their provocative thoughts and ideas were primarily related to music therapy and the importance of working in collaboration with other disciplines to enrich both the interventions and the outcomes, music and medicine remote access, interdisciplinary innovation, further understanding of the neurobiology of music to support the interventions, what makes music unique, and the music therapy profession moving from 'healing' to 'healing and essential'

for greater integration within mainstream hospital based care.

Along with the presentations, discussions arose among attendees around differentiating competencies and areas of specificity as well as ethical aspects and professional responsibilities for each of the disciplines using music in the medical context. It remains unclear whether there is a need to reflect on the contributions of musicians in the medical context, the common ground for musicians and music therapists working in a medical environment, the differences in their responsibilities, and the contributions, similarities and differences between recreational, music medicine interventions and music therapy techniques. Both the intra- and interdisciplinary debates are ongoing, while taking account of the fact that regulations on the use of music in the health field vary in different parts of the world. In addressing these aspects, it is worth taking into consideration the specific and thorough training and advanced certifications that all health professionals around the world undergo to obtain the credentials that enable their practice to deliver treatment.

The successful online event went smoothly and gracefully with beautiful musical sections in between the presentations. In addition, the Online Networking & Tea/ Quarantini Time, which was coordinated by Wendy Magee, was offered via live streaming where all the participants engaged in further discussions on the topics addressed during the presentations with a glass of wine, juice or a cup of tea by their side.

The IAMM awards ceremony created a unique moment in which the entire IAMM community celebrated two brilliant experts and leaders in the field: the Lifetime Achievement Award granted to Joanne Loewy, founder of IAMM and co-director of the *Music and Medicine* IAMM journal, and the Extraordinary Leadership Award granted to Patravoot Vatanasapt.

I invite you to take a look at the remarkable program to find more details of the amazing content and to watch the recordings of all the presentations of this fruitful and innovative IAMM 2020 conference. Join us at the next event in 2022!

REFERENCES

International Association for Music and Medicine (2020, May 30). 2020 Online Conference of the IAMM. <https://www.music-medicine.net/>