

Music Can Reduce Chronic Pain & Depression

Ed. Note: The following is a press release from Blackwell Publishing.

May 24, 2006 -- Listening to music can reduce chronic pain by up to 21 per cent and depression by up to 25 per cent, according to a paper in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 54.5.

It can also make people feel more in control of their pain and less disabled by their condition.

Researchers carried out a controlled clinical trial with sixty people, dividing them into two music groups and a control group.

They found that people who listened to music for an hour every day for a week reported improved physical and psychological symptoms compared to the control group.

The participants, who had an average age of 50, were recruited from pain and chiropractic clinics in Ohio, USA. They had been suffering from a range of painful conditions, including osteoarthritis, disc problems and rheumatoid arthritis, for an average of six and a half years. 90 per cent said the pain affected more than one part of their body and 95 per cent said it was continuous. Before the music study, participants reported that their usual pain averaged just under six on a zero to ten pain scale and their worst pain exceeded nine out of ten.

"The people who took part in the music groups listened to music on a headset for an hour a day and everyone who took part, including the control group, kept a pain diary" explains nurse researcher Dr Sandra L Siedlecki from the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Ohio.

"Forty people were assigned to the two music groups and the other 20 formed the control group.

"The first group were invited to choose their own favorite music and this included everything from pop and rock to slow and melodious tunes and nature sounds traditionally used to promote sleep or relaxation.

"The second group chose from five relaxing tapes selected by us. These featured piano, jazz, orchestra, harp and synthesizer and had been used in previous pain studies by co-author Professor Marion Good from the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University, Ohio."

At the end of the trial:

- The music groups reported that their pain had fallen by between 12 and 21 per cent, when measured by two different pain measurement scales. The control group reported that pain increased by between one and two per cent.
- People in the music groups reported 19 to 25 per cent less depression than the control group.
- The music groups reported feeling nine to 18 per cent less disabled than those who hadn't listened to music and said they had between five and eight per cent more power over their pain than the control group.

"Our results show that listening to music had a statistically significant effect on the two experimental groups, reducing pain, depression and disability and increasing feelings of power" says Dr Siedlecki.

"There were some small differences between the two music groups, but they both showed consistent improvements in each category when compared to the control group.

"Non-malignant pain remains a major health problem and sufferers continue to report high levels of unrelieved pain despite using medication. So anything that can provide relief is to be welcomed."

"Listening to music has already been shown to promote a number of positive benefits and this research adds to the growing body of evidence that it has an important role to play in modern healthcare" adds co-author Professor Marion Good.

Previous research by Professor Good and Hui-Ling Lai, published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* in 2005 and republished in journal's 30th Anniversary issue in 2006, showed that listening to 45 minutes of soft music before bedtime can improve sleep by more than a third.