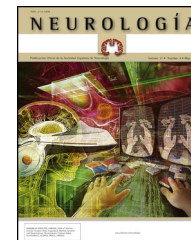




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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Benefits of music therapy on behaviour disorders in subjects diagnosed with dementia: A systematic review<sup>☆</sup>

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### KEYWORDS

Music therapy;  
Dementia;  
Behaviour;  
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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Dementia is characterised by cognitive deterioration and the manifestation of psychological and behavioural symptoms, especially changes in perception, thought content, mood, and conduct. In addition to drug therapy, non-pharmacological treatments are used to manage these symptoms, and one of these latter treatments is music therapy. Since this novel technique in non-verbal, it can be used to treat patients with dementia at any stage, even when cognitive deterioration is very severe. Patients' responses to music are conserved even in the most advanced stages of the disease.

**Development:** A literature research was carried out using the following databases: Academic Search Complete, PubMed, Science Direct y Dialnet. The period of publication was 2003 to 2013 and the search keywords were 'Music Therapy, Dementia, Behaviour, Behaviour Disorders y Behavioural Disturbances'. Out of the 2188 studies that were identified, 11 studies met inclusion criteria for the systematic review.

**Conclusions:** Music therapy is beneficial and improves behaviour disorders, anxiety and agitation in subjects diagnosed with dementia.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Musicoterapia;  
Demencia;  
Conducta;  
Alteraciones  
conductuales

## Beneficios de la musicoterapia en las alteraciones conductuales de la demencia. Revisión sistemática

**Resumen**

**Introducción:** La demencia se caracteriza por un deterioro cognitivo y por la aparición de síntomas psicológicos y conductuales, entre los que destacan las alteraciones de percepción, del contenido del pensamiento, estado de ánimo y de conducta. Para tratar estos síntomas, además del tratamiento farmacológico, se utilizan intervenciones no farmacológicas, entre ellas la musicoterapia. Esta técnica novedosa, por sus características no verbales, puede ser usada en todas las fases del tratamiento de las personas con demencia ya que, aunque haya un gran deterioro cognitivo, las respuestas ante la música se mantienen hasta los estadios más avanzados de la enfermedad.

**Desarrollo:** Se realizó una búsqueda bibliográfica con un intervalo temporal entre 2003 y 2013 en las bases de datos Academic Search Complete, PubMed, Science Direct y Dialnet. Los términos de búsqueda incluyeron la combinación de las palabras claves «*music therapy, dementia, behaviour, behavioural disorders y behavioural disturbances*». Se seleccionaron 11 registros de los 2188 localizados tras aplicar los criterios de inclusión.

**Conclusiones:** El tratamiento con musicoterapia es beneficioso para mejorar las alteraciones conductuales, la ansiedad y la agitación en pacientes con demencia.

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**Introduction**

Dementia is characterised by impairment of the cognitive functions and it leads to increasing difficulty in performing daily activities, fulfilling social functions, and remaining independent.<sup>1</sup>

Its symptoms can be categorised as loss of cognitive functions, symptoms associated with abnormal conduct or behavioural problems, changes in behaviour and personality, symptoms related to activities of daily living, and loss of ability to perform them.<sup>2</sup>

The social consequences of cognitive impairment include anxiety, sorrow, frustration, apathy, and irritability and lead to isolation and in many cases to depression, which in turn may cause behavioural alterations in these patients.<sup>1</sup>

In general, these behavioural changes exacerbate as the disease progresses.<sup>3</sup> According to a study by Wragg, depression is present in 40% to 50% of all patients with Alzheimer disease (AD)<sup>4</sup>; the frequency of delirium and delusional ideation ranges between 10% and 73%; hallucinations, predominantly visual and auditory, can affect 15% to 50%; pacing or wandering is more pronounced at night as a consequence of nocturnal disorientation and affects approximately 60% of the patients with dementia; psychomotor uneasiness or agitation, which is sometimes accompanied by other exacerbating disturbances such as anxiety or insomnia, can manifest in intermediate and advanced stages of the disease.<sup>5</sup>

Medical evidence shows that behaviour problems in elderly patients with dementia are usually managed with drugs, but these pharmacological treatments are associated with adverse effects.<sup>1,6</sup> Although these drugs are not able to resolve dementia, they are somewhat effective in delaying impairment progression, in addition to helping control associated mental illnesses.<sup>7</sup> However, there is now a wide range of non-pharmacological strategies to treat

behavioural problems. Among these strategies, music therapy is worth mentioning.<sup>8</sup>

According to the World Federation for Music Therapy (WFMT, 1996), music therapy is "the use of music and/or musical elements (sound, rhythm, melody and harmony) by a qualified music therapist, with a client or group, in a process designed to facilitate and promote communication, relationships, learning, mobilisation, expression, organisation, and other relevant therapeutic objectives, in order to meet physical emotional, mental, social and cognitive needs".<sup>9</sup>

As in other healthcare disciplines, clinical practice standards for music therapy are aimed at establishing basic action procedures (AMTA Standards of clinical practice, 2007). According to these procedures, all music therapy intervention must comprise the following stages: patient referral (and acceptance) of therapy, initial evaluation, planning, therapy implementation, documentation, and termination/discharge.<sup>9</sup>

This therapy is applied in different settings and contexts to a wide variety of patient groups. In geriatric medicine, according to independence and functional levels of elderly patients, music therapy can be used in civic centres, retirement homes, day care centres, day hospitals, patient associations, geriatric residences, and private homes.<sup>9</sup>

Responsiveness to music may be preserved even in very late stages of dementia.<sup>2</sup> While language deteriorates over the course of the disease, some musical skills are still preserved, such as the ability to play a previously learnt piece of music or a musical instrument.<sup>9</sup>

Music therapy can modulate the factors involved in cognition and conduct, call the patient's attention, provoke emotional responses and modulate them, draw on different cognitive functions, and evoke movement patterns.<sup>10</sup>

In light of the above, the aim of our review article is to ascertain the conclusions of scientific publications regarding

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