

Telehealth music therapy in end-of-life care during COVID-19: Two retrospective case studies in a hospice

(Camellia Soon, Dover Park Hospice)

Background

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had transformed the way healthcare systems worldwide operate. One major change is the rise of telehealth services. While telehealth itself is not new, social distancing measures caused a meteoric demand for telehealth through video conferencing applications. Music therapists likewise had to adapt to telehealth music therapy (Agres et al., 2021). While there is much existing literature on the benefits of music therapy for patients in palliative care, there is a paucity in research about telehealth music therapy in end-of-life care.

Method

This study highlights two retrospective case studies of telehealth music therapy in an inpatient hospice setting in Singapore. For learning purposes, the case studies show two different online experiences. One patient received music therapy service partially online, and the other received it completely online.



Figure 1. Patient receiving telehealth music therapy

Aims

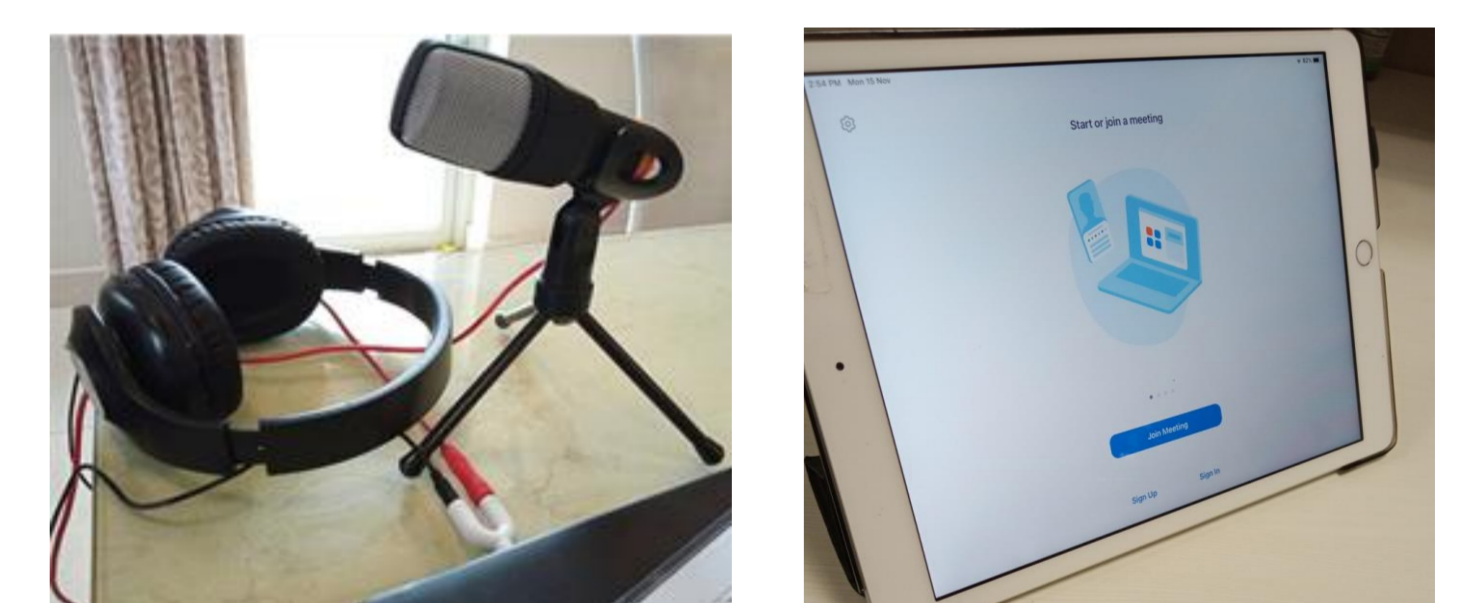
The aims of the study are to

- (1) Add to current experiential knowledge in literature about telehealth music therapy
- (2) Highlight the processes and considerations of implementing telehealth music therapy specific to the context of end-of-life care
- (3) Highlight the ways to adapt interventions for telehealth music therapy

Results

Benefits of telehealth music therapy highlighted from the study include enabling continuity of music therapy in the midst of social distancing measures, and having therapeutic impact comparable to face-to-face music therapy.

Challenges found in the study include technical difficulties such as audio delay and narrowed visual view on the online platform. Various factors such as illness progression also affected the suitability of telehealth music therapy.



Conclusions

The effectiveness of telehealth music therapy as found in the study also led to its extension to the hospice's home care services. This allowed greater accessibility of music therapy for patients receiving home care support.

Overall, this study recommends for the field of telehealth music therapy to be further developed, and also explored as an alternative additional option in palliative care.

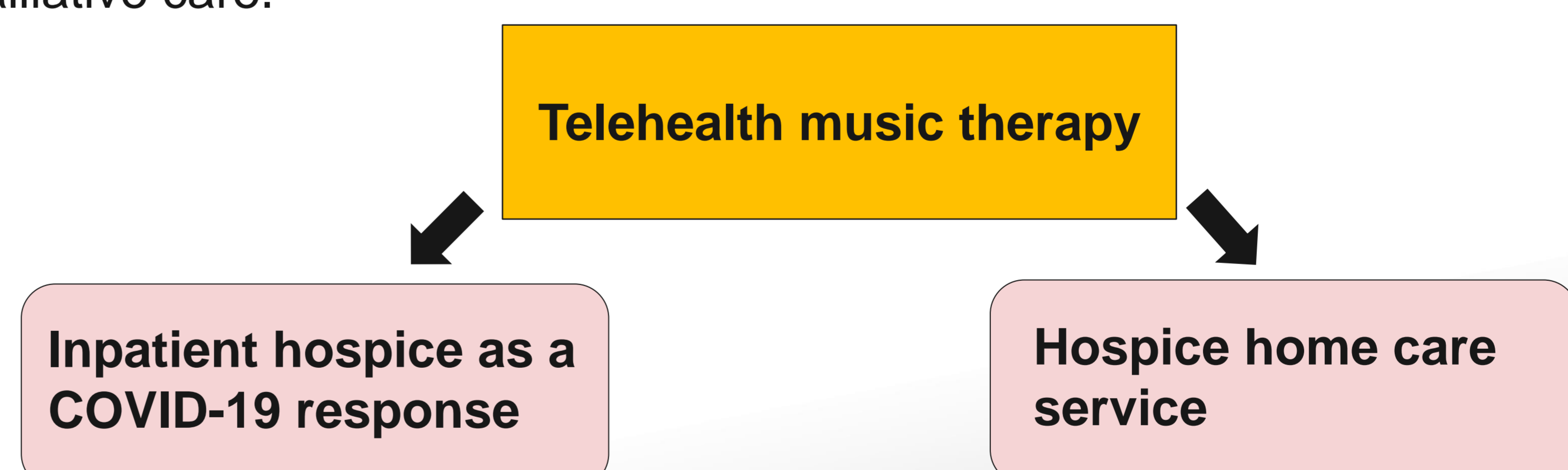


Figure 2. Telehealth music therapy services in Dover Park Hospice

Reference:

Agres, K. R., Foubert, K., & Sridhar, S. (2021). Music therapy during COVID-19: Changes to the practice, use of technology, and what to carry forward in the future. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 647790. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.647790>