

Musical Care International Network - Small Grants Report 2023

Project title: Musical Care in the face of illness: musical care groups for patients, caregivers, staff and the community of the Hospital Clínica El Carmen in Barranquilla, Colombia

Names, Affiliation and Country of all collaborators:

Music therapists involved: Ana María Díaz, Raul Suarez, Rafael Maya, Mark Ettenberger; Music Therapy Service Clínica Colsantias, Colombia.

The Hospital Clínica El Carmen is a small hospital located in Barranquilla (a coastal city in Colombia), counting with 18 ICU beds, 35 hospitalization beds, and a chemotherapy area. It focuses on patients and caregivers who are not able to afford an additional health care insurance, meaning that many patients come from low socio-economic status of the surrounding neighbourhoods of Barranquilla and other departments of Colombia, including underserved and rural populations. A large percentage are oncology patients, often facing long hospitalization times after surgeries or are transitioning to palliative care inside the hospital. One of the hospital efforts is dedicated to establishing a 'community hospital', which consists of monthly activities organized between the hospital, the patients, and the wider community, with the aim to promote common health benefits. Often, these activities are based on creating social networks or have educational purposes, such as talks carried out by healthcare professionals, or workshops for elderly people, among others. Music therapy at the Hospital El Carmen is part of standard care in the ICU and hospitalization but is not available at the 'community hospital'.

With the help of the Small Grants Scheme of the Musical Care International Network, two musical (self-)care events were held on June 9th and June 23rd, 2023, at the Clínica El Carmen, open to patients, caregivers, staff, and the surrounding community members of the hospital.

Both events focused on introducing the notion of musical care to the participants through live music. The groups were held by 2-3 certified music therapists, engaging the participants in a variety of musical experiences including collective rhythm making, improvised songwriting, or guided musical relaxations, among others. While most participants joined the groups at the central patio of the hospital, some patients gathered on the balcony or just left their room doors open. Approximately 65 participants including patients, family members, caregivers, hospital administration staff, nurses, and doctors joined the events. As part of the evaluation of the events, participants filled out a short questionnaire with two questions (Do you consider that this event helped you in your self-care? Do

you consider that this event helped you in improving your wellbeing? Answers to choose from: Yes, a lot; Yes, somewhat; No) and an open space for the participants to leave and personal messages or suggestions. 40 questionnaires were handed back after the events with 97,5% ticking 'Yes, a lot' (n=39) and 2,5% ticking 'Yes, somewhat' (n=1) in both questions. Nearly all participants left personal messages, thanking the initiative, expressing their wellbeing, and indicating that such events should be held more regularly.

This is the first project at the intersection of music therapy, community music therapy, and community music with a focus on self-care for critical ill patients, caregivers, the hospital staff, and community members. Future projects will hopefully follow to continue promoting the visibility of the Musical Care International Network and the implementation of musical experiences as a path to health and wellbeing.