

## Interaction between “Link Musicians” and Patients in a Hemodialysis Center: A Humanizing Experience that Improves Symptoms of Depression and Feeling of Well-being

Thiago dos Reis Hoffmann<sup>1</sup>, Victor Flusser<sup>2</sup>, LuisFernando Santoro<sup>3</sup> and Fernando Antonio de Almeida<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculdade de Ciências Médicas e da Saúde da PUC/SP, Sorocaba - SP, Brazil

<sup>2</sup>Université de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France

<sup>3</sup>Escola de Comunicação e Arte da USP, São Paulo - SP, Brazil.

### Letter to Editor

Individuals with end-stage renal disease (ESRD), besides having to submit to treatment by hemodialysis (HD) for four hours, three times a week, also undergo to important changes in their way of life, in family and social relationships that culminate with the impairment of their quality of life, well-being, and also being under higher risk of depression [1,2]. In addition to the symptoms of the disease, individuals under HD need many adjustments in their personal, familiar and social relationships, compromising their emotional status. Similar to what is already being done in geriatric, pediatric, and neonatal facilities in several countries of Europe, we believed that the intervention of musicians, specially trained to interact in hospitals and other health care areas (Link Musicians) would be a humanizing strategy for the individuals with ESRD in HD which could result in improvement of their adverse conditions.

The objective of the study was to identify the possible influences that the “Link Musicians” intervention during HD sessions could produce in parameters of depression assessed by The Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAM-D) [3] and in the subjective sense of well-being of patients undergoing HD at Centro de Diálise e Transplante Renal (CDTR) in Sorocaba-SP, Brazil.

The study included 24 adults on hemodialysis for more than 6 months at CDTR. Twelve patients formed the control group (no intervention) and 12 patients underwent the intervention (1 hour duration) of the same “Link Musicians” for five months on regular HD sessions on Saturdays. An open questionnaire was also applied to the patients to assess how they accepted and how the intervention affected their lives.

We observed favorable changes in the intervention group, particularly in the emotional/psychological status. Markers of

depression were high in both groups (21 out of 24 patients had moderate to severe depression scores at baseline), with a significant improvement in the intervention group only. Pre-intervention 10 out of 12 patients had moderate to severe depression scores and after intervention 6 out of 12 patients had moderate to severe depression scores (Chi-square  $p < 0.05$ ). The depression status in control group did not change from baseline (11 out of 12 patients had moderate to severe depression scores that were kept at the same levels). The open questionnaire revealed that the patients fully approved and expressed positive feelings during and after the intervention, such as attention to themselves, host interaction, family ties, and pleasant memories.

Exposing hemodialysis individuals to the presence of “Link Musicians” and their music, rescued them from their condition of deep concern, anxiety and dependence on the dialysis machine. Involving them in the musical act brought up positive feelings and harmonious past experiences and kept them away from the worry of death. Healthcare professionals from the center of hemodialysis and patient’s family members were also targets of the musicians, creating a friendly and reliable working atmosphere. This humanizing interaction in the environment of hemodialysis resulted in an improvement of psychological conditions and perception of health/well-being for patients on hemodialysis and their families. A video of the musicians and patients interaction may be accessed at: <http://www.musicos-do-elo.org/para-saber-mais/hemodialise>.

### References

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\*Corresponding author: Fernando Antonio de Almeida, MD, PhD, Faculdade de Ciências Médicas e da Saúde da PUC-SP, Sorocaba, SP, Brazil, Tel: 55 15 3212-9900; E-mail: [faalmeida@globo.com](mailto:faalmeida@globo.com)

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