MUSIC THERAPY IN TINNITUS – A PROSPECTIVE PILOT STUDY

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BACKGROUND: Tinnitus is one of the most common disorders in ENT medicine / otorhinolaryngology. Patients suffering from chronic tinnitus experience psychiatric distress such as sleeping disturbance, scant attention, anxiety and depression. Brain imaging (PET, fMRI, MEG) revealed cortical plasticity in the auditory cortex similar to reorganization in phantom pain.

OBJECTIVE: Due to the complexity of tinnitus, a comprehensive and interdisciplinary treatment is required. The music therapy concept, developed at the German Center for Music Therapy Research, aims at integrating the tinnitus sound into a musically controllable acoustic process. Aim of the present study is to evaluate the effectiveness of this new concept.

METHODS: Prospective pilot study; Sample: 10 patients (5 male, 5 female; mean age 51 ± 7 yrs), suffering from decompensated chronic tinnitus. All subjects underwent a comprehensive medical and psychological checkup in order to rule out organic and psychiatric diseases; Intervention: 12 sessions à 50 minutes individual music therapy; Target variables were tinnitus variables as well as psychological factors. The target variables were obtained through interviews and psychological questionnaires. Data collection: pre-post-measurements, process measurement every 4 weeks, follow-up after 24 weeks.

RESULTS: Results indicate a highly statistical and clinical significant decrease in mean TQ-Scores pre-post by 24,5 points or 52% (ANOVA: F(4) = 5,99, p = .002).

DISCUSSION: Despite the small sample size, the innovative music therapy concept yields statistical and clinical significant results. Further research seems to be beneficial. The costs and advantages of music-therapy in treating tinnitus are discussed.

KEYWORDS: music therapy - tinnitus - therapy outcome study