

Summary of Creative Forces Music Therapy Research Findings

February 2019

Preliminary evidence of music therapy's effectiveness with military service members and veterans in addressing traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, and other underlying psychological conditions attributable to the work of Creative Forces music therapists, patients and their families, and cross-disciplinary colleagues is summarized below.

As part of Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network¹, three music therapy research papers have been published to date and several are pending publication, including small case series, analyses of secondary data (e.g. clinical documentation, program evaluation), and innovative music therapy protocols and preliminary multi-site replication, with additional investigations underway. The findings from these studies provide a solid foundation to inform more in-depth research. The Creative Forces strategic framework and five-year agenda for clinical research calls for multisite investigations in collaboration with other health and rehabilitation disciplines². This will enable evaluation of the clinical effectiveness of creative arts therapies pertaining to health outcomes and quality of life of military personnel, families, and communities.

Creative Forces clinical research focuses on how creative arts therapies interventions **promote rehabilitation and recovery** across multiple domains, including: neurological, physiological, physical, functional, cognitive, social/relational, occupational, and psychological/behavioral difficulties.

Promising results related to several of these domains from the published and in-progress music therapy studies are summarized below. The research is also beginning to address the utility of creative arts therapies in improving some of the **quality of life outcomes** of service members (e.g., readiness for duty, ability to work, live independently, complete educational programs), as well as their benefit for outcomes such as reduction in use of health services and costs, sustainability of therapeutic benefits through continued use of creative arts therapies, etc.

- 1) Music therapy helps to foster improvement in **psychological/behavioral** functioning:
 - Music therapy is provided as integrated care and stand-alone treatment for PTSD to address behavioral health goals such as: promoting relaxation, informing mind body

¹ Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and the state and local arts agencies. This initiative serves the special needs of military patients and veterans with traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions, as well as their families and caregivers. Administrative support for the initiative is provided by Americans for the Arts.

² National Endowment for the Arts. (2018, June). Creative Forces clinical research: A strategic framework and five-year agenda (2018 – 2022). Retrieved from: <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CF-Clinical-Research-Framework-and-Agenda-10.23.18.pdf>

- connections, emotional regulation, hypervigilance, and sleep disturbance (Bronson, Vaudreuil, & Bradt, 2018).
- A music therapy group protocol in an interdisciplinary treatment model is a useful initial experience for active duty service members to acclimate to music therapy as well as optimize feelings of safety and reduce perceptions of threat during emotional risk-taking (Vaudreuil, Biondo, & Bradt, 2018).
 - Active duty service members perceive group music therapy as moderately to very helpful in enabling the expression of emotions through music and increased awareness of somatic responses to music (Vaudreuil, Biondo, & Bradt, 2018).
- 2) Music therapy can promote **neurological** and **cognitive** functioning:
- Music therapy is provided as integrated care and stand-alone treatment for TBI to address cognition and memory, sustained/focused attention to task, divided attention/multitasking, problem-solving skills, speech and language, auditory processing (auditory perception and tolerance of auditory stimuli), motor control and response, and headaches (Bronson, Vaudreuil, & Bradt, 2018).
 - In collaboration with other treatment disciplines, music therapy contributes to improvements in articulation, task-attention, and compensatory strategies (Vaudreuil, Avila, Bradt, & Pasquina, 2018).
- 3) Music therapy has been shown to alleviate **social/relational** difficulties:
- Music therapy is provided as integrated care and stand-alone treatment for PTSD and TBI to;
 - Enhance interpersonal communication, reduce isolation, and support familial bonding/social engagement (Bronson, Vaudreuil, & Bradt, 2018).
 - Enable exploration of music preferences and foster identity and self-efficacy (Bronson, Vaudreuil, & Bradt, 2018).
 - The use of musical performance in music therapy with military service members with PTSD and TBI can;
 - Contribute to individual development and rehabilitation (Vaudreuil, Bronson, & Bradt, 2018).
 - Be a vehicle for social transformation and re-integration – it can give voice to their experiences, raise awareness of social issues within their communities, transform perceptions of injury or illness in audience members, and may result in the clients gaining support and validation from their communities (Vaudreuil, Bronson, & Bradt, 2018).
 - In collaboration with other treatment disciplines, music therapy contributes to improvements in social integration, quality of life, and overall motivation in the recovery process (Vaudreuil, Avila, Bradt, & Pasquina, 2018).
 - Songwriting enables service members to share their thoughts, emotions, fears and hopes with family, friends and other providers, often for the first time, and plays an important role in their personal growth and recovery process (Bradt, Biondo, & Vaudreuil, in press).

- Songwriting in music therapy can help returning service members to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation by offering a window into service members' lived experiences of military service, injury, recovery, homecoming, and transition from active duty, particularly in the areas of: (a) personal struggles and barriers to recovery, (b) moving forward, (c) relational challenges, and (d) positive relationships and support (Bradt, Biondo, & Vaudreuil, in press).
- 4) Music therapy can yield improvement in the domains of **physiological, physical, functional, and occupational** abilities:
- Music therapists can help ease discomfort and difficulty associated with rehabilitation activities, thereby enhancing patient motivation and participation in interdisciplinary care (Vaudreuil, Avila, Bradt, & Pasquina, 2018).
 - In collaboration with other treatment disciplines, music therapy contributes to improvements in range of motion, functional use of bilateral upper extremities, strength endurance, and breath support (Vaudreuil, Avila, Bradt, & Pasquina, 2018).

*Music therapy assists treatment processes along the **clinic to community** continuum, making it **highly valued by the patient, family, and interdisciplinary team members in military healthcare.**³ **There is a clear need across the DoD and VA for music therapy services, and further research can support its inclusion as a standard of care for the treatment of military service members, veterans, and their families.**⁴ *Further exploration of performance integrated into music therapy*⁵ will yield further information on the therapy's community impact.*

³ Vaudreuil, R., Avila, L., Bradt, J., & Pasquina, P. (2018). Music therapy applied to complex blast injury in an interdisciplinary model: A case report. *The Journal of Disability and Rehabilitation*. doi: 10.1080/09638288.2018.1462412

⁴ Bronson, H., Vaudreuil, R., & Bradt, J. (2018). Music therapy treatment of active duty military: An overview of intensive outpatient and longitudinal care programs. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 36(2), 195-206. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mtp/miy006>

⁵ Vaudreuil, R., Bronson, H., & Bradt, J. (2018). Bridging the clinic to community: Music performance as social transformation for military service members. Manuscript under review.

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