

Abstract

Reducing rural isolation through music: telehealth music therapy for community dwelling people living with dementia and their family caregivers in rural Ireland

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Abstract

Introduction: Since the outset of COVID-19, we have become more reliant on technology to stay connected to others. Notable benefits of telehealth have been observed, including increased access to health and community support services for community dwelling people living with dementia and their family caregivers and diminishing barriers such as geographical location, mobility issues and increased cognitive decline. Music therapy is an evidence-based intervention for people living with dementia and

has been proven to promote improved quality of life, increase social interaction and provide a form of meaningful communication and expression when language becomes difficult. This project is one of the first internationally to pilot telehealth music therapy for this population.

Methods: This mixed methods action research project has six iterative phases of planning, research, action, evaluation, and monitoring. Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) has been sought from members of The Dementia Research Advisory Team at the Alzheimer Society of Ireland at all stages of the research process to ensure the research remains relevant and applicable to those with dementia. The presentation will briefly outline the phases of the project.

Results: Preliminary results from this ongoing research suggest that there is feasibility for telehealth music therapy to provide psychosocial support to this population. Collaboration with PPI contributors resulted in the following research priorities: (1)

ensuring a person-centered approach; (2) advanced care planning using music; and (3) the signposting of music related supports for community dwelling people living with dementia. Music therapy is being piloted currently and preliminary results will be outlined.

Discussion: Telehealth music therapy has the potential to complement existing rural health and community services for people living with dementia, in particular addressing social isolation. Recommendations regarding the relevance of cultural and leisure pursuits on health and well-being of people living with dementia will be discussed, particularly the development of online access.

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