Antidepressants Versus Music Therapy: Which Treatment Is Better for Treating Depression in Parkinson’s disease?

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Introduction
- The multidisciplinary field of music and medicine is currently being investigated for its role in depression management in Parkinson’s disease (PD)
- Treatment of depression in PD is important since depression affects other factors in PD like cognition and mortality¹
- Antidepressants, the current form of treatment despite having limited trials on PD subjects, are reported to have mixed results in PD populations
- Music therapy, whose studies are also limited in nature, are reported to have positive potential in PD populations
- Ambiguous results of antidepressants in PD patients warrant further research into music therapy as an alternative form of depression treatment in PD.

Results
- Results of a meta-analysis conducted by Daniel Weintraub suggest no difference between antidepressant and placebo treatment in PD depression²
- PD patients do not respond as well to antidepressant treatments as non-PD patients²
- In The Individual Therapeutic Singing Program for PD (ITSP-PD), the average Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) scores were significantly lower (p=.018) directly after therapy and then increased in a 6-month follow-up (F/U) after therapy³
- A participant in the drum study said, “I learned the importance of connecting to the group in a joyful way. It was great being in a drumming circle instead of a drooling circle”⁴

Methods
This research compares the effects on depression in patients with PD as a result of the use of antidepressants and music therapy. This information was collected by gathering studies that focused on each type of treatment separately and analyzing the numbers produced as a result of the patient-reported outcome measure in depression.

Conclusions
- Antidepressants can improve depression in PD but have limitations
- Lower GDS scores post-music therapy indicate improved depression in PD patients, but their rise after a while of therapy raises questions about the long-term impacts of music therapy
- More research for effective management of PD depression needs to continue given the lack of studies on this topic and other limitations
- With the same standardized patient-reported outcome measure, these two depression management treatments should be compared in future research.

References

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