

Music Therapy Charity
Final report – 25 February 2020

1. Title of project and your name

Trends, patterns and gaps in music therapy and spirituality: A systematic review of the research literature

Dr Giorgos Tsiris

2. Study aims, planned length of the project and actual length of the project by the end of the project.

This systematic review aims to provide a detailed overview of the current research literature on music therapy and spirituality. and identify trends, patterns and gaps in the field. Data collection and analysis were completed in 2018-2019.

3. Please provide a summary of up to 500 words including:

Despite the rich spiritual roots of many music therapy practices and approaches, spirituality remains an underdeveloped research area. Adopting a critical stance towards the emerging spiritual discourse in the field, this systematic review aims to provide a detailed overview of the current literature and identify research trends, patterns and gaps in music therapy and spirituality. Instead of assessing 'effectiveness' – a concept which can be problematic in music therapy's exploration of spirituality – this study gives an overview of the research literature in terms of its characteristics to include authorship and publication characteristics, as well as music therapy approaches, methodological orientations and foci. This systematic literature review was conducted through a relevant search of terms in four databases. With no temporal delimitation, the search focused on scholarly research publications such as journal articles, theses and dissertations. Any publication written in English and irrespective of its methodological design was included. Clinical case studies, position papers and previous literature reviews were excluded to enable a focus on empirical research. Collected studies were reviewed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics to identify emerging themes, trends and patterns in the literature as appropriate.

This study was partially funded by The Music Therapy Charity (Registered charity number: 259077) and The Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at Queen Margaret University):

- October 2018; £1,500 (MTC grant) towards data extraction and analysis
- November 2018; £1000 (CASS) towards the development and testing of the review protocol, as well as the data extraction for the project.

The preliminary research findings were presented at the International Symposium "Music, Spirituality, Wellbeing and Theology", University of Winchester, Winchester, UK, 14-15 June 2019. The study will also be presented at the 2020 conference of the British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT). A journal article presenting the full study is currently in progress and will be submitted for publication before the end of 2020.