



Music therapy annual report 2025 *Lake Shore hospital*

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Introduction

This report outlines the activities in 2025 carried out by Sophie Pinard, music therapist, who works three days per week, supporting patients in the oncology clinic as well as those hospitalized in oncology and palliative care at Lake Shore hospital.

Therapeutic Objectives

The therapeutic objectives of the program are designed to address the unique needs of patients in oncology and palliative care:

1. In Oncology:

- Reduce stress and anxiety during and after sessions, providing tools for relaxation at home.
- Improve vital signs, such as lowering blood pressure and heart rate.
- Divert attention from pain and facilitate better management of chronic or acute pain associated with cancer treatments.
- Motivate patients to adhere to treatments, turning music therapy sessions into a positive aspect of their care.
- Encourage social interaction among patients, fostering mutual support and shared experiences.
- Provide an outlet for emotional expression, allowing patients to process their feelings related to their diagnosis and treatments.
- Use music to help patients feel a sense of agency in their lives through moments of active choice and creativity.

2. In Palliative Care:

- Facilitate the expression of complex emotions, such as fear, sadness, and gratitude.
- Create meaningful moments between patients and their families, encouraging connection and intimacy.
- Offer opportunities for musical legacy creation, such as composing personalized songs or playlists.
- Support families through the grieving process with musical memories that honor their loved ones.
- Aid patients in exploring personal or spiritual reflection through music that fosters inner peace and acceptance.

Service Statistics

Category	Follow-ups	New	Total
Total visits	380	133	513
Oncology	249	80	329
Palliative care	76	47	123
Hosp. oncology	55	6	61

Sessions typically range from 30 to 65 minutes and are adapted to each patient’s clinical condition, needs, and energy level. These variations reflect the importance of continuity of care and the flexibility required to provide meaningful, patient-centered interventions. The music therapist worked 102 days with approximately 5 appointments per day.

During a typical workday, the music therapist also dedicates time to essential clinical tasks completed outside of direct patient contact, which contribute significantly to the quality and depth of interventions. These include legacy work, such as composing, refining, and recording songs created in collaboration with patients, allowing them to leave a meaningful and personal legacy for their loved ones. This deeply human process represents a unique contribution of music therapy, particularly within palliative care.

The music therapist also dedicates time to learning and preparing songs tailored to each patient’s cultural background, age, and personal preferences, in order to create meaningful and relevant therapeutic experiences. She works in close and ongoing collaboration with interdisciplinary teams to ensure that interventions are aligned with each patient’s health journey and to provide the highest quality of care. In addition, each session is documented through detailed clinical notes to support continuity and quality of care. These behind-the-scenes activities are essential to maximizing the impact, accessibility, and overall reach of the music therapy service.

Patients and families have shared numerous positive outcomes stemming from music therapy sessions:

1. Reduction of Physical Symptoms:

Music therapy has been effective in alleviating pain, reducing nausea, and promoting relaxation. Patients often express these benefits spontaneously, saying things like, “I don’t feel any pain right now,” “My pain decreased from a 7–8 to a 4–5,” or “I was feeling nauseous, but now I feel better.” Another example, a patient requested PRN pain medication from the nurse. However, after the music

therapy session began, the patient changed her mind when the nurse arrived, stating that the music had helped her relax and that her pain had decreased. This example illustrates how music therapy can, in some cases, reduce the need for PRN medication.

2. Meaningful End-of-Life Moments:

Music therapy facilitates profound and meaningful experiences for families. Music at the end of life, including in situations where a patient is in a coma, gives families an opportunity to continue offering something meaningful to their loved one and to create a lasting, beautiful memory during a deeply important moment.

3. Legacy work:

The music therapist collaborated with several oncology patients, including individuals receiving end-of-life care, to compose original songs, offering them a meaningful opportunity to create a lasting legacy for their families.

One patient, for example, co-wrote a legacy song for her daughter. This song has since become part of a family ritual: it is sung together with her daughter and grandchildren each day after school, creating a continued sense of connection and shared presence. In addition, the music therapist recorded the patient's voice speaking one of the verses, allowing the family to preserve and revisit this intimate expression for years to come. Reflecting on this experience, the patient shared:

« Écrire cette chanson fut un privilège unique sur une musique tout aussi unique. Mes paroles, guidées par l'accompagnement de Sophie, ont donné naissance à une œuvre qui touche à l'intimité du lien entre ma fille et moi, tout en rejoignant également mes petits-enfants. Un véritable cadeau du ciel, empreint d'une présence éternelle. »

4. Improved Mood:

Sessions frequently result in observable improvements in emotional well-being. Patients have shared comments such as, "You've completely lifted my mood", "I feel so light, almost like I'm floating" or, "This completely changed my afternoon and this will stay with me for a while". These experiences support emotional resilience and assist patients in coping with anxiety related to treatment.

5. Support in hospitalisation:

Music therapy sessions in a hospital setting provide significant support to patients and their families. This period is often stressful, sometimes prolonged, and frequently filled with uncertainty. These sessions allow patients to regain a sense

of hope and to momentarily escape the hospital environment in their minds. One patient shared "*Ça m'a donné du courage, de la joie, de la gaieté*", "*Ça m'a permis de vivre un beau moment avec ma petite fille à l'hôpital*", "*J'ai pu partager mon amour pour ma femme avec la musique*", "*la musique nous reste en tête, ça rappelle des souvenirs, ça fait du bien*", "*ça me faisait aussi une visite, du support, quelqu'un à qui parler*". The patient's partner stated: "*Ça me touchait à chaque fois, ça me faisait du bien de le voir sourire*". Music therapy sessions contribute to enhancing patients' overall well-being in a context where opportunities for deeply meaningful and joyful experiences are often limited.

6. Music Therapy in MAID Care

During a Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) intervention, the music therapist can provide a cheerful and/or calming and supportive presence by singing before and throughout the procedure has decided by the patient and their family. The music is carefully chosen in collaboration with the patient and their loved ones, reflecting personal preferences and meaningful songs. This continuous musical presence helps create a peaceful atmosphere, reduces anxiety, and supports emotional expression during an otherwise challenging moment. Music therapy can transform this experience into a more intimate and meaningful one, allowing patients and families to share a final moment of connection, comfort, and dignity.

One patient invited approximately 15 loved ones to be present for this significant moment. She shared: "*Je suis contente que tu viennes pour cette journée-là, j'aime ma famille mais parfois je ne sais plus quoi leur dire. Avec la musique ça va nous permettre de vivre un beau moment ensemble.*" The family collectively selected songs that were meaningful to the patient, and simple percussion instruments were provided to encourage their participation. The patient expressed a preference for mostly joyful music. As the family sang together, the continuous presence of music throughout the intervention helped create a more human, intimate, and meaningful experience. Both the patient and her family expressed deep gratitude for the support provided during this moment.

Conclusion

Music therapy continues to offer patients and families opportunities to find moments of meaning, expression, and connection throughout the cancer and end-of-life experience. Whether through symptom relief, emotional support, or legacy creation, music therapy allows patients to maintain a sense of identity and agency during challenging times. Moving forward, the program will continue to evolve to meet emerging needs while preserving its core mission: to support patients and families through compassionate, creative, and person-centered care.