

## A Collaborative Approach to Improving Mental and Physical Health-Related Outcomes for a Heart Transplant Patient Through Music and Art Therapy Treatment

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**Abstract :** Heart transplant recipients face psycho-physiological stressors, including pain, lengthy hospitalizations, delirium, and existential crises. They pose an increased risk for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and can be a predictor of poorer mental and physical Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL) outcomes and increased mortality. There is limited research on the prevention of Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms (PTSS) in transplant patients. This case report focuses on a collaborative Music and Art Therapy intervention used to improve outcomes for HMH transplant recipient John (Alias). John, a 58-year-old man with congestive heart failure, was admitted to HMH in February of 2021 with cardiogenic shock, cannulated with an Intra-aortic Balloon Pump, Impella 5.5, and Venoarterial Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (VA-ECMO) as a bridge to heart and kidney transplant. He was listed as status 1 for transplant. Music Therapy and Art Therapy (MT and AT) were ordered by the physician for mood regulation, trauma processing and anxiety management. During MT/AT sessions, John reported a history of anxiety and depression exacerbated by medical acuity, shortness of breath, and lengthy hospitalizations. He expressed difficulty sleeping, pain, and existential questions. Initially seen individually by MT/AT, it was determined he could benefit from a collaborative approach due to similar thematic content within sessions. A Life Review intervention was developed by MT/AT. The purpose was for him to creatively express, reflect and process his medical narrative, including the identification of positive and negative events leading up to admission at HMH, the journey to transplant, and his hope for the future. Through this intervention, he created artworks that symbolized each event and paired them with songs, two of which were composed with the MT during treatment. As of September 2023, John has not been readmitted to the hospital and expressed that this treatment is what "got him through transplant". MT and AT can provide opportunities for a patient to reminisce through creative expression, leading to a shift in the personal meaning of these experiences, promoting resolution, and ameliorating associated trauma. The closer to trauma it is processed, the less likely to develop PTSD. This collaborative MT/AT approach could improve long-term outcomes by reducing mortality and readmission rates for transplant patients.

**Keywords :** art therapy, music therapy, critical care, PTSD, trauma, transplant

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