Demographics

The present number of registered music therapists in New Zealand is 51. The majority of these work in part-time or sessional employment. Music therapy has been practiced in New Zealand over the last 25 years and a gradual migration of overseas trained therapists has seen the population of therapists increase during this time. The commencement of the Wellington based Masters in Music Therapy course in 2004 has enabled the profession to expand considerably over the last few years. Music therapists work primarily in and around the three main cities of Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. A small number of therapists work in more isolated locations.

One third of registered music therapists practicing in New Zealand currently work within the area of Early Intervention. Services are provided on both a direct and consultancy basis. Therapists working exclusively with this client group work part-time or on a sessional basis. A small number of therapists in full-time employment provide services to children of varying ages.

Music therapy is provided to young children in a variety of settings. These include early intervention centers including the Wellington Early Intervention Trust, family homes, community, early childhood centers, kindergartens, and the Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre in Auckland.

A number of music therapists working in Early Intervention are employed within specialist teams including government funded and independent charitable trusts. Some therapists work with children presenting with a variety of special needs. Others work for organizations focusing on specific needs such as hearing and visual impairment. Some music therapists are self-employed, working through early childhood agencies, or directly with families. All music therapists work as part of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary teams and contribute to children’s Individual Plans where possible. Collaborative approaches at differing levels are an integral part of music therapy practice.

____

Results from a recent (2008) online survey of 36 Registered Music Therapists working in New Zealand in which a 50% response rate was achieved.

Karen Twyford
Music Therapist
in Private Practice
Wellington, New Zealand

"In my experience music therapy is a most integral component of the multidisciplinary team. Aside from the sheer joy and delight experienced in music therapy sessions, children also have the ability to reach their full potential and develop skills in the most motivating context. I cannot imagine our centre operating without the wonder of music therapy."

Victoria Crone, Pediatric Physiotherapist, Coordinator, Wellington Early Intervention Trust

Background Information

Music Therapy New Zealand (MThNZ) is the professional body representing music therapists. Music therapists are encouraged to apply for registration with MThNZ to gain a practicing certificate. As the profession continues to establish its identity, New Zealand agencies are encouraged to employ only registered music therapists. The Ministry of Education endorses this approach and lists registered music therapists within its Specialist Services Standards (2006).

Sources

Common Approaches

Music therapists working with young children employ both client centered and family centered approaches. Therapists are aware of the NZ health model for promoting Maori health, Whare Tapa Wha, and incorporate this where applicable. The model concentrates on the four pillars of mental, physical, spiritual and family health. Consultative approaches are necessary.
where availability of music therapy resources are scarce. By using this approach, skills and knowledge are imparted to families and professionals working with young children. This ensures that skills and strategies modeled by music therapists can be continued and used in the home and other settings.

A variety of techniques are used with children in Early Intervention with a focus on improvisational models. Music therapists work with individuals and small groups. This work can include parents and/or peers. An emphasis is placed on the establishment of a therapeutic relationship and through this, identified physical, emotional, intellectual and social aims can be addressed. Music therapists use structured musical activities and free musical play/improvisation, including singing, chanting, movement and use of instruments and multi-media props.

Prominent Publications


About the Author

Karen has worked as a music therapist in Australia, England and more recently, New Zealand. She has worked in a variety of clinical areas since 1992, with the majority of her experience being with children. Karen is currently self employed and is contracted by the Ministry of Education, Special Education, in the areas of early intervention and school focus. Her work focuses on inclusion, children with special educational needs, autism and transdisciplinary teams.

Special thanks to Fiona Hearn for her assistance with this article.

Contact: karen.twyford@xtra.co.nz