

## EDITORIAL

# Collaboration, critique, diversity

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### Publication history:

Submitted 14 Apr 2020

Accepted 18 Apr 2020

First published 25 Apr 2020

This new issue of *Approaches* is published amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its dramatic implications worldwide. In these unprecedented and worrying times, music therapy organisations and practitioners are exploring and developing new ways of supporting people including patients, their families, as well as frontline healthcare workers. Aiming to document and disseminate such initiatives more broadly, we are actively encouraging submissions by practitioners, researchers and students who wish to reflect on the implications of the current situation for music therapy, locally, nationally or internationally (Approaches, 2020).

The papers in this issue have already appeared as online advance publications and are therefore not specific to the current COVID-19 situation. Their contents, however, bring to the fore timely issues and questions for the music therapy field, as well as for its relationship to related fields and practices. Spiro, Tsiris and Cripps, for example, offer an introduction to outcome measurement in music therapy while retaining a reflective stance towards the prevailing evidence-based practice movement. In doing so, they promote a critical and contextual understanding of the potential use of outcome measures in music therapy. The use of such measures is exemplified in StGeorge and Freeman's quasi-experimental research which is focused on a ten-week school-based intervention – the social-emotional learning programme, DRUMBEAT. Students and teachers completed pre- and post- measures which demonstrated improvements in students' self-esteem and internalising and externalising behaviours. However, as Spiro, Tsiris and Cripps argue, research environments do not always reflect the "naturally messy reality" (p. 12) of music therapy practice. In StGeorge and Freeman's case, while results were positive, the authors acknowledge that practitioners may have implemented the programme differently across participating schools.

Moreover, researchers not only inform audiences about the outcomes of music therapy practice but also provide explanations regarding why change occurs, adding to and extending the

existing knowledge base, and developing new theoretical frameworks (Edwards, 2016). To this end, Fidler and Miksza's article reports findings from an integrative review of the literature which aimed to uncover theoretical explanations that could account for the observed effects of music on pain. While they found that music-induced analgesia is a consistently observable phenomenon in clinical settings, theoretical explanations for the effect of music on pain are varied, undeveloped and lacking in physiological evidence. Interestingly, Fidler and Miksza argue for more rigorous methodological practices and suggest that this may require more extensive cross-disciplinary collaborations between experts in music therapy, music medicine, and neuroscience. In a similar vein, Short and Heiderscheit argue that Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) practitioners, who predominantly work autonomously, will be increasingly expected to work with other professionals in order to improve people's care. However, while noting that sharing information and experiences, engaging in dialogue and learning from each other will lead to a more robust, accessible and professionally embedded body of knowledge for GIM practice, they also highlight barriers and challenges regarding interprofessional collaborative research. Further reflections around interprofessional exchange and collaboration are offered in Pickard and Romppanen's interview with a focus on their experiences as music therapists teaching across disciplines in higher education.

Holden, Coombes and Evans describe an action research process which utilised a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to find out whether and how a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) process might impact on music therapy students' practical and clinical reasoning skills. The authors argue that "the combination of facts, figures and participants' experiences gathered using this mix of research methods led to a clearer picture of the overall effect of the use of a PBL approach in music therapy training" (p. 93).

As music therapy research is growing, a wider range of methods and methodological approaches are being utilised with varied epistemological underpinnings (Edwards, 2016). This edition of *Approaches* highlights the ongoing importance of this diversity as well as the need to engage critically with it in theory and in practice. Throughout the papers mentioned above, as well as the numerous book reviews and conference reports included in this issue, a valuing of diverse practices and understandings is emerging together with the powerful potential of collegial partnerships. On this note, we would like to express our gratitude to all the individuals who served as reviewers of manuscripts submitted to *Approaches* in 2019 (see: <http://approaches.gr/reviewers-2019>) and warmly thank our colleague Varvara Pasiali for her significant contribution as associate editor between 2017 and 2019. In recent months, as the journal's work is expanding, we have welcomed with excitement Andeline Dos Santos as our new associate editor, as well as Theo Dimitriadis, Mitsi Akoyunoglou and Stamatis Manousakis, who have joined the team of *Approaches* as advisory editorial board member, language consultant and publishing assistant respectively.

## REFERENCES

- Approaches (2020). *Our response to COVID-19*. Retrieved from <http://approaches.gr/our-response-to-covid-19>
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