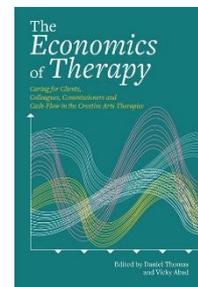


BOOK REVIEW

The economics of therapy: Caring for clients, colleagues, commissioners and cash-flow in the creative arts therapies (Thomas & Abad, Eds.)



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Title: The economics of therapy: Caring for clients, colleagues, commissioners and cash-flow in the creative arts therapies **Editors:** Daniel Thomas & Vicky Abad **Publication year:** 2017 **Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers **Pages:** 240 **ISBN:** 978184905628

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The value proposition surrounding music therapy practice and the creative arts therapies is intricately tied to a complexity of factors, including: macroeconomics in the global marketplace; regional and local markets; policy trends; public and private financing schema; and a whole host of important questions in microeconomics. Understandably, this is a thorny and understudied topic in music therapy and creative arts therapies. Fortunately, *The Economics of Therapy, Caring for Clients, Colleagues, Commissioners, and Cash-Flow in the Creative Arts Therapies*, edited by Daniel Thomas and Vicky Abad, is a welcome contribution to the body of literature.

The scope and aims of this book are limited, as noted in the introduction by the editors. More specifically, the editors of the book set out to explore the commonalities and intersection of therapy and economics. Their approach is pragmatic and experiential, drawing upon the contributions of eleven authors among eleven chapters. Importantly, a discourse on topics in economics typically identifies the economic perspective(s) under examination. Questions in health economics may be approached from several economic perspectives: societal, provider/clinician, client/consumer, or payer. Even though the book acknowledges and broadly touches on each of these perspectives, the authors approach their discussions from the clinician's perspective. The reason for this approach, as noted passionately by the editors and authors, is a call for therapists to heed and respond to the

endogenous and exogenous forces bearing upon the sustainability and viability of creative arts therapies.

The reader benefits from the varied clinical and business experiences of the authors to inform important and knotty questions in the economics of music therapy and other arts therapies. As Brynjulf Stige notes in the forward, not all questions are addressed; however, the book makes a substantial contribution to prompting discourse. Stige offers an engaging and thoughtful forward to help contextually frame the book and highlight themes and arguments presented in the book. This includes the authors' focus on the inseparability of the economics of therapy from the ethics of clinical practice, given constrained resources and dynamic local markets affecting supply and demand. In a real sense, the forward and editors' introduction prompts the reader to reflect on one's own experiences, perspectives, and preconceptions about economics in the arts therapy marketplace.

The book is roughly divided into three sections. Section 1 includes chapters one and two and concentrates on current trends in funding therapy services as well as what commissioners want. Here, the term commissioner refers to any stakeholder purchasing creative arts therapy services on behalf of a client or group of clients; therefore, the authors address the consumer perspective by speaking to the role of commissioners. Section 2 consists of three chapters examining how clinicians may meet the needs of commissioners and funding entities in an environment of constrained budgets and shifting resources. Section 3 turns to applied case studies and includes an approach to teaching music therapy students about the business of music therapy using a tertiary training syllabus. Most of the chapters include supplementary resources or what the authors termed "go and do it" exercises to actively engage the reader in a whole host of activities to inform and increase awareness about creative arts therapy economics and business.

Section 1: Chapter 1, by Daniel Thomas and Vicky Abad, is titled the same as the book title. The authors concentrate on funding sources and their financing streams and models. Importantly, the authors begin with a strengths approach and highlight the importance of relationships in clinical and business practice. Sustainable practices in arts therapy require attention to economic health and the authors note the possibility of a variety of business models to accomplish this. Thomas and Abad recognise the juxtaposition of "money and therapy" may raise moral or ethical dilemmas among clinicians. The authors argue ethical concerns should not be avoided; rather, they should be given attention and approached with integrity and resolve. Chapter 2, by Alison Ledger, is titled *Entrepreneuring in Arts Therapies: Not Just Making a Swift Buck*. Alison relays, in part, findings from her dissertation focusing on the experiences of music therapists in developing new services. After offering a concise definition and explanation of models of entrepreneurship, the author extrapolates and cross-walks characteristics of music therapists that transfer and support good entrepreneurship and business growth.

Section 2: Translating skills from therapy practice to support business growth and economic acumen is a core theme of the book. Chapter 3 is a case in point. The chapter is authored by the editors and titled *RAILE – Building a Win-Win Business Model for Therapy*. RAILE is a model and acronym representing core clinical skills that also complement business development and business sales. Resiliency (R), attunement (A), improvisation (I), listening (L), and empathy (E) support clinical practice

and also translate to business practices to grow business, problem-solve, collaborate, network and communicate, and manage the business of therapy. If therapists feel trepidations about their knowledge, skills, and abilities concerning the business of therapy the authors tackle this head on, beginning with the therapists' clinical strengths. The fourth chapter, titled *For What It's Worth...Determining the Value of Music Therapy: An Example from Austria*, was co-authored by Monika Geretsegger, Elena Fitzthum and Thomas Stegemann. Following an informative discussion and contextual background regarding the Austrian health system and the role of music therapy practice in the context of national policy and the Music Therapists Act, the authors also outline education and training for the music therapist in Austria. This interesting context serves as foreground to a discussion of valuation of music therapy. The authors organise their discussion from various perspectives and include both macro- and microeconomic considerations. Most importantly, the authors triangulate the relationship and dependency of music therapy research and training with perceived value from multiple stakeholder viewpoints. Stine Lindahl Jacobsen closes out this section with chapter 5, titled *Ethics, Marketing and Transparency*. The emphasis of this important chapter concentrates on how therapists may integrate transparency, integrity, and ethical thinking into clinical practice. These aims are considered applicable and important no matter the business model, setting, or sector (public or private). Jacobsen offers a rubric of issues taken from clinical practice and research to guide discussion and organise her chapter. Issues include information transparency, ethical marketing, supervision, fee-setting, documentation, and client independence and termination of services. Jacobsen reminds us that these issues require clear communication and integrity in business practice and policy so commissioners (and consumers) know and understand what they are buying and the value of therapy. In short, the author is insightful and raises the critical importance of business and professional ethics to assert a credible and reliable value proposition for high-quality therapy services.

Section 3: The book closes with a series of case studies and descriptive chapters. The section begins with growing the business acumen among the next generation of music therapists. Chapter 6, by Petra Kern, is titled *Educating Students: Getting Ready for the Job Market*. Kern provides a creative and well-organised presentation of a tertiary five-week training curriculum for upper-level music therapy students to prepare them for the job market in the United States. The programme is highly experiential, involves a range of readings and materials tied to improving students' knowledge, skills, and abilities around music therapy business practices and growth. The readers enjoy an appendix with a detailed summary of the programme content, schedule, learning objectives, and assignments. Even though the nuts and bolts of business management (e.g. understanding and using accounting software) are not covered in the scope of this book, Kern sets the tone to inspire therapists to grow their base of knowledge, skills, and business practice abilities. Chapter 7 is authored by Rebecca Zarate and titled *Creative Arts Therapies and Business in the USA: Perspectives and Perception*. Zarate provides a personal narrative and description of creative arts therapies in business while highlighting the intricacies of navigating varied perceptions of the arts therapies among stakeholders and decision-makers. The author shares vignettes and experiences from ten creative arts therapists located throughout the country. Interestingly, Zarate draws upon education and learning theorist Étienne Wenger to emphasise how learning and knowing in the context of the economics of therapy takes

place in communities of practice. As such, multiple domains of learning are involved in clinical practice communities and extend to the network of civic and business communities. Having suggested a novel model for thinking about the intersection of economics and therapy, Zarate turns to the pragmatic aspects of business practice models in creative arts therapies. The intricacies of state and federal laws governing scope of practice and recognition of qualified clinicians are referenced and can be confusing, entangled with politics, and a source of frustration as described by Zarate. Keeping up with state regulations across all 50 states and territories is the work of advocacy and government relations in the United States; and, among music therapists, it a networked and coordinated process. It is important to note, in this case study, not all arts therapists are treated the same with respect to scope of practice, credentialing requirements, and recognition by state authorities across the many states. Zarate, therefore, refers to the importance of coalitions, mentoring, collaborative networks, and national credentialing for purposes of advocacy and growth of the profession.

The remaining chapters consist of four interesting case studies. Elaine Matthews Venter offers her perspective on a new private practice in New Zealand in chapter 8, titled *Developing an Arts Therapy Practice*. Matthews Venter provides a clear outline of the practical aspects of growing a new business start-up. She reminds us of the power of technology to optimise business marketing through online tools and social media channels such as YouTube and blog sites. The author shares a practical set of appendices with forms and templates tied to the business of clinical practice. Chapter 9 is titled *Managing Business Growth from the Bottom Up: Turning Your Small and Niche Passion into a Business*. This chapter, authored by Vicky Abad, opens with a captivating turn of phrase where Abad notes she started her business with a passion and not a plan. Abad describes her journey and path to building an active business step-by-step from the ground up as a small business person and with numerous demands and responsibilities. Abad shares her lessons learned and the advantages and disadvantages of growing a small business practice. Practical exercises are suggested to help manage and inspire the work of running a small business. Daniel Thomas offers the next case study in chapter 10, titled *Independence, Passion, and Resilience: Learning to Think Big from the Start*. With humour, Thomas leads the reader in a discussion of the dual role of resilience and passion for business-building and growth of the profession. He contextualises this discussion around the value and importance of a core vision for arts therapy practice. The conclusion of the case study includes two useful exercises to inspire collaboration, business networking, and development of interim goals in fulfilment of a professional and business vision. The last case study, by Kingman Chung, is titled *Striking a Balance: Music Therapist vs. Businessman in Hong Kong*. Chung describes the challenges and opportunities of growing a vital and active music therapy business in a major urban centre in Asia. He reminds the reader of the importance of culture on the design and delivery of therapy services and suggests clinicians consider the cultural context of business planning and growth. Finally, Chung cautions the reader not to under- or overestimate the impact of one's professional work. Instead, Chung advises an ongoing focus on quality, client-centred services delivered with passion, and professionalism.

In the context of the economics of therapy, Chung's closing thoughts bring the book full circle to highlight the importance of high-quality, ethical services delivered with integrity and using sound business practices. A reprise of the title, in summary, reminds the reader to attend to "clients, colleagues, commissioners, and cash-flow" as part of the economics of therapy. Indeed, given this

reprise, the value proposition for arts therapies may grow. In summary, this book takes on an immensely challenging but important topic and does so in an accessible and engaging fashion. I am grateful to the editors for their vision to bring this book to publication and to the many authors' contributions. I look forward to increased attention to the economics of therapy in the music therapy and arts therapy literature.