

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

General correspondence

Music as medicine: a way to buoy staff morale in the age of COVID-19

Music can heal the wounds that medicine cannot touch.

As countries all around the world deal with the profound devastation of COVID-19, the fostering of staff well-being is paramount to best patient care. This has always been a fundamental principle in healthcare, but it has become more important than ever in these stressful times.

At the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Music Therapy department has helped the hospital come together to perform as a virtual 'Scrub Choir'. Here, music is used as a social glue to boost staff morale, foster a sense of engagement and create a message of hope.

In this unique project, over 200 individuals across all areas of the hospital (doctors, nurses, Allied Health, volunteers, hospital executive members and service staff), submitted individual videos performing to the song 'Count on Me' by singer, Bruno Mars.¹ Following that, each individual video was painstakingly edited together by the head of Music Therapy to form one 'choral' performance – physically distanced for safety, but emotionally engaged and united by song.

Music is well recognised in holistic patient care.^{2,3} But for healthcare workers, the benefits are also clear. Studies demonstrate a role for music in mitigating psychological burnout and orchestrating well-being.^{4,5} The 'Scrub Choir' is a welcome relief from the extra pressures that

the pandemic places on clinical responsibility across the whole of the organisation. It is a moment to forget about lists and tasks, and to engage in a moment of reprieve alongside colleagues. We have received positive messages from our health colleagues around the world as they could sense the heart and hope in the song's delivery and production.

It is evident that the pandemic will persist for longer than any of us would like; therefore, our attentions must turn to innovative new ways to protect workers' psychological well-being. For all the efforts that are engaged in shoring up physical protection, similar energies must be spent augmenting mental well-being – a psychologically shattered healthcare worker is, ultimately, an ineffective one. And our patients are relying on us to be at our best.

Musically yours,

The RMH Scrub Choir¹

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr Mya Cubitt (Royal Melbourne Hospital) for her support and assistance in drafting this manuscript.

Received 14 July 2020; accepted 14 July 2020.

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