Music Intervention for Sleep Improvement

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BACKGROUND
There is a common-sense connection between music and sleep as witnessed by the many lullabies sung for children all over the world. Previous studies have found that music listening can improve sleep quality in elderly persons with sleeping difficulties1,2, hospitalized persons3 and persons with sleep problems due to psychological distress such as physical abuse4 and depression5. Another group of people with severe sleep problems are traumatized refugees who often suffer from insomnia and repeated nightmares. Severe sleep problems have several negative consequences such as fatigue, decreased memory function, dysphoria and impaired immune system6. Therefore, viable interventions to improve sleep quality are of great value to both the individual and society. The aim of the present pilot study was to investigate the effect of bedtime music listening on sleep quality in traumatized refugees.

RESULTS
The participants listening to music experienced a significant improvement of sleep quality from pre to post intervention. No change was found in the control group. The data showed a significant pretest difference between the groups, with the music group experiencing significantly more sleeping problems prior to the intervention. Still, both groups suffered from considerable sleeping difficulties with PSQI scores well above the cut-off score 5 which separates ‘good’ and ‘poor sleepers’. To control for this pretest difference we calculated a change score for each group, and statistical comparisons revealed that the music group experienced significantly more improvement in sleep quality than the control group (t (13) = 2.25; p < .05).

CONCLUSIONS
Our findings indicate that listening to slow relaxing music at bedtime can have a positive effect on sleep quality in traumatized refugees. In line with former studies, the results provide evidence for the use of music as a non-pharmacological intervention for sleep problems. When considering the debilitating effect of sleep problems along with several other stressing life circumstances in the population of traumatized refugees, music provides a safe and pleasant intervention that is easy to implement.

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References:

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