

Music improves sleep quality in older adults.

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Abstract:

Aim: The aim of this paper is to report an investigation of the effects of soft music on sleep quality in older community-dwelling men and women in Taiwan.

Background: Sleep is a complex rhythmic state that may be affected by the ageing process. Few studies have focused on the effects of music, a non-pharmacological method of improving the quality of sleep in older adults.

Method: A randomized controlled trial was used with a two-group repeated measures design.

Sixty people aged 60-83 years with difficulty in sleeping were recruited through community leaders and screened using the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) and Epworth Sleepiness Scale. Those reporting depression, cognitive impairment, medical or environmental problems that might interfere with sleep; and those who used sleeping medications, meditation, or caffeine at bedtime were excluded. Participants listened to their choice among six 45-minute sedative music tapes at bedtime for 3 weeks. There were five types of Western and one of Chinese music. Sleep quality was measured with the PSQI before the study and at three weekly post-tests. Groups were comparable on demographic variables, anxiety, depressive symptoms, physical activity, bedtime routine, herbal tea use, napping, pain, and pretest overall sleep quality.

Results: Music resulted in significantly better sleep quality in the experimental group, as well as significantly better components of sleep quality: better perceived sleep quality, longer sleep duration, greater sleep efficiency, shorter sleep latency, less sleep disturbance and less daytime dysfunction ($P = 0.04-0.001$). Sleep improved weekly, indicating a cumulative dose effect.

Conclusion: The findings provide evidence for the use of soothing music as an empirically-based intervention for sleep in older people.

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