

## CANCER, AIDS, DEGENERATIVE DISEASES

A person in the final stages of cancer, AIDS or a degenerative disease needs to be accompanied by individuals who respect the specific needs of this final stage of life. The person can have significant difficulties expressing his/her emotions and communicating with his/her loved ones. The person may feel distressed at having to cope with pain, multiple losses and the fact that he/she will have to take leave of loved ones.

Music therapy can contribute to the general comfort of the person by alleviating certain symptoms and by offering him/her a means of self-expression and a way to communicate his/her needs. In collaboration with the multidisciplinary team, the music therapist identifies the person's physical, emotional, social and/or spiritual needs. The music therapist then chooses an appropriate mode of intervention. Priority can be given to pain relief, the improvement of the quality of sleep, the expression of his/her emotions, the ability to communicate with loved ones, finding meaning in his/her life, etc. Individual sessions are usually favoured, however the person can also participate in relaxation groups, or a group that employs various art forms including music such as drawing, painting or poetry. Loved ones can also join in music therapy sessions.

To attain these objectives, the music therapist employs a variety of methods and techniques that use music in all its forms. The communicative and creative properties of music are central to the client-therapist relationship and therapeutic interactions.

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The person may be invited to listen to musical selections or songs that are significant to him/her, to participate in vocal or instrumental improvisations, to contribute to the composition of song lyrics in order to express his/her emotions, to record a musical offering for his/her loved ones (compose song lyrics and/or melodies, choose selections from a repertoire of pre-composed music, etc). A wide variety of instruments (guitar, piano, percussion instruments to name a few) are incorporated into sessions in order to satisfy each individual's musical preferences and to offer a meaningful and rich experience. In short, music therapy is a useful means to reach a person who is in the final stages of cancer, AIDS or a degenerative disease and to promote his/her well-being.

For additional information about music therapy or if you wish to communicate with a music therapist:

Association québécoise de musicothérapie  
[www.musicotherapieaqm.org](http://www.musicotherapieaqm.org)  
Tel. 514.264.6335

[info@musicotherapieaqm.org](mailto:info@musicotherapieaqm.org)

