

Promoting health through music in motherhood: perceptions of pregnant and puerperal women

Promovendo saúde por meio da música na maternidade: percepções de gestantes e puérperas

Promoviendo la salud a través de la música en la maternidad: percepciones de las mujeres embarazadas y puérperas

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to understand the perceptions of pregnant and postpartum women about the use of music as a care technology for health promotion. **Method:** qualitative research, based on the assumptions of health promotion, carried out with seven pregnant women and eight postpartum women admitted to the maternity ward of a public hospital in Santa Catarina. Semi-structured interviews were carried out between September 2021 and February 2022, after approval by the Research Ethics Committee. Data were analyzed using content analysis. **Results:** music in the maternity ward reduces stress and sadness. In addition, it provides distraction, joy, animation, recall of memories, a special moment, gratitude and tranquility for hospitalized women and their babies. **Final considerations:** for pregnant and postpartum women, music has the ability to promote health, being a care technology that should be present in all maternity hospitals in Brazil.

Descriptors: Hospitals; Maternity; Health Promotion; Complementary Therapies; Music; Music Therapy.

RESUMO

Objetivo: compreender as percepções de gestantes e puérperas sobre o uso da música como tecnologia de cuidado para promoção da saúde. **Método:** estudo qualitativo, fundamentado nos pressupostos da promoção da saúde, realizado com sete gestantes e oito puérperas internadas na maternidade de um hospital público de Santa Catarina. Realizou-se entrevistas semiestruturadas, entre setembro de 2021 e fevereiro de 2022, após aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa. Os dados foram analisados por meio da análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** a música na maternidade diminui o estresse e a tristeza. Além disso, proporciona distração, alegria, animação, resgate de lembranças, momento especial, gratidão e tranquilidade para as mulheres hospitalizadas e para os seus bebês. **Considerações finais:** para as gestantes e puérperas, a música tem a capacidade de promover a saúde, sendo uma tecnologia de cuidado que deveria estar presente em todas as maternidades do Brasil.

Descritores: Maternidades; Promoção da Saúde; Terapias Complementares; Música; Musicoterapia.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: comprender las percepciones de embarazadas y puérperas sobre el uso de la música como tecnología de cuidado para la promoción de la salud. **Método:** estudio cualitativo, basado en los supuestos de la promoción de la salud, realizado junto a siete mujeres embarazadas y ocho puérperas internadas en la maternidad de un hospital público de Santa Catarina. Las entrevistas semiestructuradas se realizaron entre septiembre de 2021 y febrero de 2022, previa aprobación del Comité de Ética en Investigación. Los datos se analizaron mediante análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** la música en la sala de maternidad reduce el estrés y la tristeza. Además, brinda distracción, alegría, animación, recuperación de recuerdos, momento especial, gratitud y tranquilidad para las mujeres hospitalizadas y sus bebés. **Consideraciones finales:** para las mujeres embarazadas y puérperas, la música tiene la capacidad de promover la salud, siendo una tecnología de atención que debe estar presente en todas las maternidades de Brasil.

Descriptores: Maternidades; Promoción de la Salud; Terapias Complementarias; Música; Musicoterapia.

INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, health promotion actions became more evident with the implementation of the Brazilian National Health System (*Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS*) and the debate on the relationships between social inequalities, democracy, and human development in the field of collective health¹. In 2006, the National Health Promotion Policy (*Política Nacional de Promoção da Saúde - PNPS*) was established. It underwent reformulations in 2014 and 2017, based on the SUS itself, encompassing the expanded concept of health, the theoretical framework of health promotion, and the results of its practices since its inception. This reaffirmed Brazil's dedication to enhancing and expanding health promotion initiatives within SUS services and administration^{2,3}, which also encompassed the hospital setting.

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It is worth mentioning that in the hospital sector, care is more focused on recovering health and is generally considered a technical approach, with actions centered on curing the disease rather than the individual's entirety⁴. However, it is urgent to redefine this situation in order to develop comprehensive care practices that promote health in this setting.

The hospitalization process involves changes in people's daily routines, particularly due to the separation from their normal environment and social context, leading them to experience rigid and often painful routines due to procedures that have the potential to trigger fear, insecurity, stress, and depressive crisis⁵. These feelings can also emerge in maternity wards, which are usually seen as more welcoming and lighter sectors, as most admissions occur for the birth of a new person⁶.

In this scenario, it is necessary for healthcare providers to develop comprehensive care practices through establishing rapport and dialogue to reduce harm during the hospitalization process⁶.

In this care context, Integrative and Complementary Practices (ICPs) emerge as health promotion strategies in the hospital [7]. For example, the use of music directly and indirectly affects the health of hospitalized individuals by providing moments of distraction and peace, as well as promoting the relief of stress, anxiety, and fear⁸. Music has several contributions that involve the body and mind, as it helps reduce pain and distressing sensations; improves sleep⁹; promotes well-being; encourages autonomy for self-care; and fosters self-reflection and awareness of the sensations aroused. It is a valuable technology for promoting health in various healthcare settings^{5,8}. Therefore, music as a health promoter benefits all those involved in the hospitalization process (patients, family members, and the professional team), significantly contributing to quality care in the field of obstetric nursing⁷.

Based on the above, the following research question arose: What are the perceptions of pregnant women and postpartum women regarding the use of music as a care technology to promote health during hospitalization in maternity wards? This study is justified by the scarce scientific evidence regarding the benefits of music as a health promoter in the hospital setting^{5,7,10}.

It is believed that the use of music as a care technology needs to be disseminated so that healthcare institutions recognize its effects and more commonly associate it with rehabilitation in the hospital setting rather than just as a strategy for health promotion¹⁰. Therefore, the aim of this study was to understand the perceptions of pregnant women and postpartum women regarding the use of music as a care technology for health promotion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based on the theoretical framework of health promotion. As described in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986¹⁰, health promotion involves actions that empower individuals to live healthy lives with quality. It is associated with a set of values: life, health, solidarity, equity, democracy, citizenship, development, participation, and joint action. It reinforces five strategies: healthy public policies; creation of healthy environments; strengthening community action; developing personal skills; and reorienting the healthcare system¹¹.

The combined focus on these strategies is more effective than each one in isolation. Nevertheless, further advancements are necessary due to the prevailing influence of the biomedical model, especially within the hospital environment. Health promotion has been largely overlooked in this context, with the responsibility for such practices often delegated to Primary Health Care (PHC) and community services³.

METHOD

This was a qualitative study based on the theoretical assumptions of Health Promotion^{3,11}, following the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ).

The research setting was the maternity ward in a public hospital in the West of Santa Catarina, Brazil. It is worth noting that this institution did not have effective health promotion strategies. However, in 2018, a faculty member from the undergraduate nursing program at a public university in the region identified this gap and developed an extension program that used music as a health promotion resource.

This extension program is composed of students and faculty members from the aforementioned program who carry out weekly musical interventions in the maternity ward with the aim of promoting the health of hospitalized individuals, their family members, and the care providers. During these encounters, the participants sing songs in the hospital corridors, entering the rooms only of those who accept the musical intervention. The repertoire consists of reflective songs that address optimism, hope, joy, love, faith, and friendship, accompanied by a violin, a ukulele, and percussion instruments.

Study participants were 15 women, including seven pregnant women and eight postpartum women. The inclusion criteria considered being hospitalized in the maternity ward, being over 18 years of age, and having the physical and cognitive conditions to respond to the questions. Women who had not received any musical intervention in the hospital were excluded from the study. All invited women agreed to participate in the study, and there were no refusals.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between September 2021 and February 2022, after the musical intervention of the extension program. The interviews involved various questions, including: What is the experience of hospitalization in the maternity ward like? What are the possibilities for promoting health during hospitalization? What was your experience like when receiving music in the maternity ward? What meanings and feelings did the music evoke in you?

The interviews were conducted by one of the researchers, who had experience in this type of approach, with an approximate duration of forty minutes. They were conducted in the participants' hospital rooms, seeking privacy and tranquility for the participants. During the interview, after each participant's response, the researcher reiterated the shared data, seeking to validate the collected information. The interviews continued until data saturation, when the responses became repetitive without adding new information. They were audio-recorded and transcribed with the participants' authorization, obtained through reading and signing of the Informed Consent Form.

The data analysis and interpretation were performed through content analysis, developed in three stages: a) pre-analysis, b) exploration of the material, c) treatment and interpretation of the results¹². The first stage consisted of pre-analysis, with free-floating reading of the information gathered in the interviews and subsequent organization of the material, defining the recording units. Next, the material was explored through the coding of the raw data into recording units, aiming to reach the core understanding of the text, and defining the categories in which the results would be presented. Finally, the treatment and interpretation of the results were carried out, organizing them into two categories¹²: "Music as a way to promote health in the maternity ward" and "Music: awakening emotions and feelings in hospitalized women".

Regarding the ethical aspects, it is important to emphasize that the study was part of a matrix project approved by the Research Ethics Committee of a Public University in Santa Catarina on August 26, 2021. Prior to the interviews, the participants were provided with two copies of the Informed Consent Form to clarify any doubts and inform them about the research's purpose.

To maintain the participants' anonymity, codes were used, consisting of a letter and numbers corresponding to the total number of interviews. Accordingly, the interviewed postpartum women were identified as P (P1, P2, P3...) and the pregnant women as G (G1, G2, G3...).

RESULTS

Among the 15 interviewed women, seven were pregnant and eight were postpartum, aged between 21 and 28 years. Among the pregnant women, two were hospitalized for glycemic control associated with diabetes mellitus (DM), two for hypertensive crisis control, two due to preeclampsia, and one due to a ruptured membrane. All postpartum women were waiting for discharge from the hospital in the presence of their children, who were born without any complications.

Next, the categories that emerged from the analysis are presented.

Music as a way to promote health in the maternity ward

The participants emphasized that music promotes health in the hospital environment, acting as a remedy that alleviates sadness, reduces stress, and breaks the silence of the place. In this context, they highlighted that the use of music in the hospital makes a difference to the health of hospitalized individuals.

Music promotes health. It's a balm for our sorrows. I think it comes as a sweet remedy. (G3)

Music can promote health because it reduces our emotional stress. Here in the hospital, it's very silent, with unpleasant news, and music cuts through that. (G5)

It makes a difference because you've been here for three days and you only see nursing technicians, people who come to administer medication, people who come to clean [...] and when you see people who come to sing, who bring a positive message, this contributes to health [...]. (G2)

Another finding was the benefit of the musical intervention for the babies who were rooming-in, with a visibly calming effect. The music also provided moments of distraction from the experience and routine of hospitalization, which helped the women think beyond caring for their babies, promoting health.

He (the baby) liked the music... as soon as you started singing, he started moving and calming down. (G6)

It's a moment of relaxation... the music helps you unwind a little. (P7)

For the time that you're in here, sometimes sad, desperate, with a heart broken out of concern, and the music cheers you up. It helped me feel a lot better. (G7)

The participants also commented that the lyrics and melody of the songs bring meaning along with the health-promoting action, not just through the effect of producing sound but by conveying uplifting messages. They also mentioned that the lyrics of the songs evoked positive memories from the past. Therefore, the need for health-promotion actions in the hospital environment, as well as the use of music, to provide more humanized care was evident.

The song's lyrics have a story, and that's very nice because it brings meaning. (P1)

The songs bring meaning, they touch the depths of the person's heart. (G6)

I remembered my father a lot, who used to sing these songs. He has passed away... and for me, it was good, it brought back memories of him singing. (G4)

I think there should be more projects like this in hospitals, which are often seen as cold, sad places. Many people need this joy to make the day lighter. More human care, which I think is sorely lacking. (P8)

Music: awakening emotions and feelings in hospitalized women

The participants highlighted the feelings and emotions that the music evoked. They affirmed that the music emanated peace, tranquility, and comfort, acting as a form of therapy. They also emphasized that the musical intervention in the hospital environment provided encouragement, joy, and hope, contributing to the women's well-being.

The music was a sensation of peace, tranquility. It brings comfort. (P1)

It's a form of therapy. Music brings comfort, peace. (P6)

It lifts the heart. Having you here is wonderful, it makes us happy. (P5)

[...] It uplifts us. It was emotional. (G4)

Furthermore, they also highlighted that music in the hospital creates a special moment filled with joy and meaning as they are present with a new life. Several accounts revealed the sensations and feelings that were awakened in women while the music was being played in the maternity ward.

Holding my daughter and listening to music is very gratifying. (P6)

I think it's a moment to bring more joy to this space, a special moment, especially here in the maternity ward, with the babies. (P8)

I was very moved, to the point that I couldn't even sing the song, I just cried. (P1)

I was feeling a bit sad because we get tired of being here in the hospital. Then the music came, it was so beautiful, it felt like a choir of angels. (G3)

They also mentioned that the fact that being in the maternity ward associated with a happy reason for hospitalization, in this case, the birth of a child, influenced how they perceived the musical intervention and its benefits in the hospital setting. On the other hand, they pointed out that in other hospital departments considered more critical, the effects of music might be even more potentiated. The women expressed various expressions of gratitude and congratulations for the development of the extension program, reflecting how those few minutes were precious and how necessary they are in the lives of other people.

I am in the hospital for a very happy reason, which is not common in other cases where it's always about treating something. So, I think here this joy emerges more, and in other places, it could provide care and support to those receiving treatment. (P1)

Congratulations on the project. I think the world needs more things like this. (P7)

I would like to thank you for these special minutes, for touching our hearts [...] music should be present in every maternity ward in Brazil. (G7)

It was shown that music can be a technology for promoting health in the hospital environment, especially in the maternity ward. The interviewees emphasized the importance of maintaining the continuity of the extension program in the hospital and organizing similar initiatives in maternity wards throughout Brazil. They emphasized the difference it made to have the opportunity to receive this musical moment during the hospitalization process, awakening emotions and positive feelings in them.

DISCUSSION

The hospitalization process brings about changes in people's daily lives, especially for women admitted to the maternity ward who are usually eagerly awaiting the arrival of a new family member. In this scenario, it becomes

necessary to employ strategies to make this healthcare less stressful¹³. The complications most common during the gestation period that may require hospitalization are: diabetes mellitus (DM), hypertensive crisis, pre-eclampsia (PE), and ruptured membranes¹⁴⁻¹⁶, which corroborate the findings of this study.

In the postpartum period, which is considered a risky period, comprehensive nursing care is essential, aiming to promote health in its broadest sense. However, this is often a neglected moment, characterized by technical care that lacks comprehensive assistance, focused more on the babies¹⁷. It should be highlighted that during the hospitalization process, the practice of humanized and comprehensive care benefits all parties involved, including the hospitalized women in the maternity ward, their babies, companions, and the institution staff, considering the dialogue in the act of caregiving¹⁸.

There are various tools, such as the use of CIPs, which can mitigate the discomfort generated during the hospitalization process for women in the maternity ward. Music is a care technology that effectively promotes health and can be used by the nursing team and other healthcare providers¹³. In this context, music emerges as a possibility to expand the care, promoting the health of all actors involved in the hospitalization process. Thus, music enables autonomy and fosters well-being and quality of life for the individuals involved¹⁹.

The perceptions reported by the participants were consistent with scientific findings, reinforcing how music can promote health and contribute to the psychological and clinical progress of an individual, improving physiological and cognitive aspects through a sense of well-being, distraction, and sharing of emotions^{5,8-10}. Music alleviates the stress, loneliness, sadness, and silence of the hospital environment²⁰. It is important to emphasize that health promotion is affirmed in the Ottawa Charter, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining health-supportive environments¹¹. Therefore, music can be considered a care technology for promoting health in obstetric nursing practice and other professionals in the hospital setting⁸.

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the healthcare team to expand care strategies, moving away from the biomedical model, with the aim of providing comprehensive, humanized, and creative care, such as the use of music in the hospital^{19,20}. It should be noted that the National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices reinforces the National Health Promotion Policy, citing music and its elements (rhythm, melody, and harmony) as contributors to health promotion, addressing physical, emotional, mental, social, and cognitive needs²¹.

The use of music with infants has long been employed in various cultures, either as a way to entertain them or calm them. Music contributes to conveying tranquility to newborns as well as stimulating the development of their cognitive functions²². It should be noted that music carries messages that leave an impression on the listener, triggering a process of reflection. Furthermore, music inherently carries meaning derived from previous experiences⁷. Through music, people can connect with their life stories, reliving memories through significant recollections and experiences²³.

Music evokes emotions and feelings, however, each person responds uniquely to its stimuli⁵. This is due to the emotions that involve the body and mind, triggering behaviors that may or may not be externally perceived²⁴. Therefore, the use of music as a complementary therapy in maternity care should be encouraged by obstetric nurses. Therefore, it is emphasized that the approach of CIPs with comprehensive and humanized care, tailored to the needs of each individual, should be included in the education and training of future nurses, expanding their role and competence in healthcare services^{20,25}.

Study limitations

A limitation of the study was the difficulty of conducting interviews in the hospital, especially with the postpartum women who were focused on caring for their children and sometimes had difficulty maintaining their attention during the data collection.

The continuation of studies involving this theme is suggested in order to expand the scientific evidence on the use of music as a care technology to promote health in maternity settings. It is a low-cost strategy that could be more effectively implemented in the Brazilian hospital setting⁹.

It is believed that the results of this study can contribute to the field of health, particularly in the practice of obstetric nursing, considering that this profession is strongly based on health promotion⁷, in favor of comprehensive, qualified, and humanized care in this sector.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

For the pregnant and postpartum women that participated in this study, music had the potential to promote health in the maternity setting. It was identified that the musical intervention in the maternity ward provided effects

such as reducing stress and sadness, which often accompany hospitalization; bringing tranquility to women and their babies; creating special moments of distraction, joy, and excitement; and evoking positive emotions and gratitude.

The impact of the lyrics of the songs was evident, bringing intense meaning and emotion, along with memories from outside the hospital environment. It is important to highlight that music does not serve as a substitute for personalized treatment for each person. However, it does play a role in alleviating tension throughout the hospitalization process. It enhances care with a focus on innovative technologies and CIPs, continuously pursuing the consolidation of the principals of the SUS.

In this context, CIPs emerge as a possibility for action in the field of health and obstetric nursing beyond the process of labor, which highlights the need for more creative, sensitive, and expanded care in maternity wards throughout Brazil. Accordingly, the continuation of studies on the use of music and other CIPs in comprehensive care for pregnant women, postpartum women, their babies, and their companions during the hospitalization process in maternity wards is suggested.

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Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, T.M.M. e J.B.S.; methodology, T.M.M., J.B.S. e O.M.R.; validation, J.B.S., I.C.Z., I.T.S.B.H., O.M.R, S.S.P.B.; formal analysis, J.B.S., O.M.R, I.C.Z., I.T.S.B.H. e S.S.P.B.; investigation, T.M.M.; data curation, J.B.S. e I.T.S.B.H.; manuscript writing, T.M.M., J.B.S., O.M.R, I.C.Z., I.T.S.B.H. e S.S.P.B.; writing—review and editing, S.S.P.B.; visualization, S.S.P.B.; supervision, J.B.S.; project administration, T.M.M., I.C.Z., I.T.S.B.H., O.M.R and S.S.P.B. have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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*“... que a vida é trem bala, parceiro E a gente é só passageiro prestes a partir”
Trem bala - Ana Vilela*