Is a combination of physical therapy and music therapy treatments more likely to maintain in children with Rett syndrome than traditional physical therapy alone?

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What is Rett syndrome?
• Genetic, neurological syndrome
• Females more than males
• Manifests as loss of functional hand use, loss of speech, apraxia, ataxia, autonomic system dysfunction, epilepsy, breathing abnormalities, failure to thrive, muscle tone irregularities
• Difficulty expressing emotions and engaging with others
• Stages
  • I: Onset
  • II: Rapid Destructive
  • III: Plateau
  • IV: Late motor deterioration

Physical Therapy Treatment
• Addresses motor skills, transitional skills, musculoskeletal deformities (scoliosis), muscle tone, range of motion, independence with ADLs

Drawbacks of Physical Therapy Alone
• PT can be unpleasant and upsetting due to inability to express emotion effectively
• Difficult to motivate and engage in sessions
• Transitions between treatments are difficult

Music Therapy Treatment
• Addresses functional hand use, social behavior, communicative potential, attention, and emotional expression
• Strong motivational factor for learning and physical skills that may not be realized
• Using music can help improve learning ability in children with Rett syndrome

Drawbacks of Musical Therapy Alone
• Difficulty stabilizing posture to promote distal mobility

Ways to Incorporate Music into PT Sessions
• Singing songs the child enjoys
• Playing recorded music during session
• Encouraging the child to play instruments
• Working with a musical therapist

Physical Therapy & Music Therapy Combined
• Physical therapist can help child with proximal stability for distal mobility in order to play music
• Music during session helps motivate child to participate in therapy by making the session more enjoyable
• Combining therapies helps reduce the total time child spends in therapy
• Music can help structure session and help child anticipate and transition between activities

Conclusions
• Incorporating music into a physical therapy session can help children with Rett syndrome by motivating them and making sessions more enjoyable
• An interdisciplinary approach can improve the child’s response to treatment and make it easier for both professionals to work with the child

References