Creating Music to promote people’s health: A dialogical workshop sponsored by FIOCRUZ foundation to help students who carry Chagas disease and their respective families in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

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Abstract. The recent (ABR) Method – Art-Based Research (Leavy, 2009) our approach that uses the performance as a way to expand the “data” possibilities. Our transdisciplinary group from FioCruz Institution organized the first ABR workshop in Rio de Janeiro, 2016 to reflect upon the possible exchange between Science and Art. We have had over 10 sessions on this issue ever since. The use of music in qualitative research can be viewed less as an experiment and more as a realization (Leavy, 2009).

Keywords: health promotion, music creation, Art based Research, performance

1 Objectives

Assess the acceptance and participation of the patients to make them aware of the importance of Music to promote their health.

Investigate the articulation between science and Art- in this case making music together with the patient that become Students and their families at FIOCRUZ – RJ.

Make a valuable contribution to non-formal education, so that the health system, incorporate the Music making process into their strategies.

2 Methodology

The methodology we use is the Art-Based Research (Leavy, 2009), that is considered one of the possibilities of Qualitative Research. Five researchers participate in the research. The “data”, in this case, can also be presented as “Musical Performances”, thus art can be regarded as a way of knowledge by itself. ABR method unify the research self with the artist self and give the qualitative researcher alternatives to the traditional method of making questions and also present the results.

ABR is grounded in a philosophy of arts-based research, which Gerber et al. (2012, p.41) suggest:

. Recognizes that art has been able to convey truth or bring about awareness (both knowledge of the self and knowledge of others).
Recognizes that the use of the arts is critical in achieving self or other people’s knowledge.
Includes multiple ways of knowing, such as sensory, kinesthetic, and imaginary.

We raised patient awareness to become familiarized with the properties of the sound, as a preparation and warm-up for the final activity. During the last activity, we performed together and played Brazilian popular songs by using different rhythms from our vast culture (e.g. Samba etc.). At the end of the workshop, we collected testimonials from volunteering students.

Our reference in terms of Music education is L.C. Csekô, who developed the workshop of musical language in the 70’s as a way to expand the traditional method of teaching music. He was influenced by the contemporary movement thinking critically the melodic and harmonic possibilities, in the field of music education.

In terms of Popular Education, our main reference is Paulo Freire, a Brazilian Professor, who helped illiterate people to learn how to read and write by using a dialogical approach. This kind of learning approach collectively and critically examines everyday experiences and raises consciousness for organizing and movement building, acting on injustices with a political vision in the interests of the most marginalized.

3 Development

A fair number of workshops were held adopting an experimental approach. Their outcome showed that the participants involved got quite pleased and reported that music can actually help them search for a better quality of life. In addition, it expands the possibilities of non-formal education and promotes health through musical language.

It is worth mentioning that music gives additional meaning to life and brings aspects from our culture through an aesthetic bias. It not only strengthens our collective ties, but also makes us care for one another. Ultimately, patients and family members feel stronger as they develop a network to face life hardships and treatments.

The workshops held during the research demonstrated how practical activities using music benefit people’s health as well as develop them emotionally. Some testimonials given during the workshops from Associação do Rio Chagas reinforced the participants’ satisfaction with such activities.

Here is one of the testimonials regarding the activity done: “We had a wonderful and relaxing experience combining science and music. We got quite thrilled and this has contributed to our well-being.” (participant 3).

The workshops held for Associação Rio Chagas consisted mainly of senior citizens. We were pleased to realize the pleasant sensations experienced by this group who not only deals with the afflictions of their age, but also the fact that they carry Chagas disease. It is a chronic disease that debilitates one’s organ and forces the afflicted ones to adapt to this condition.

Thus, we have reached the conclusion that music can be a powerful tool to improve health to this group as it promotes their mental condition as mentioned in some of the testimonials below:

“It was amazing. I felt a lot better. When we got together here, we experienced human touch. Music sets your spirit free. It renews your soul. To join art and music is so good. I can’t express this sensation in words. (...) Ever since I joined this Associação I attended an event where I danced.
I hadn’t danced in twelve years and today I did. We even square danced, each in his or her own way. It was awesome.” (participant 2).

We observed during the workshops how the musical practices really strengthen the ties among the participants and family members to face life hardships and treatments. After analyzing some of the testimonials, we found that the patients see music as a means to distract them from the day-to-day problems of everyday life. Despite knowing that the workshop goals are much greater than that, we have to admit music is relaxing to both parties, the one who hears and the performer himself. It is as if music takes them to another dimension. Given the fact they carry a chronic disease and the stress that it causes, their attitude is quite positive. Here are some more testimonials below:

“Music can help your health. While you are entertained with it, you forget about your problems. That is so good.” (participant 3) Music is really good, it is a therapy in itself. If we take the disease into account, we will get even sicker. So we pretend not to have it.” (participant 5).

4 Final Considerations

The experience of holding the workshops made us realize that the use of music in a loose manner to promote health encourages the participants to be connected with themselves, their memories, their forgotten happiness due to their health condition. Thus, the disease is no longer the main concern of their lives even if we manage to make them forget about it for a few moments.

We did this project to be able to reflect on the results obtained from the combination of Science, Art and their ramifications in the triad music, health promotion and art based research. We used the ABR methodology to present the qualitative traditional data through the artistic performance. In our case, we chose music to promote health in a broader sense.

In terms of Anthropological and Psychological terms, we think that Music can help to develop the self steam of the participants using the ABR method, and also develop Health, when emphasize our rich culture, called “Brasilidade”.

References


