

## EXPERIMENT REPORT

### SING AWAY SORROW, CAST AWAY CARE: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT ON THE USE OF MUSIC AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CHILD HEALTH PROMOTION

QUEM CANTA SEUS MALES ESPANTA: UM RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA SOBRE O USO DA MÚSICA COMO FERRAMENTA DE ATUAÇÃO NA PROMOÇÃO DA SAÚDE DA CRIANÇA

QUIÉN CANTA SUS MALES ESPANTA: UN RELATO DE EXPERIENCIA SOBRE EL USO DE LA MÚSICA COMO HERRAMIENTA DE ACTUACIÓN EN LA PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD DEL NIÑO

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#### ABSTRACT

Considering the importance of music in people's health, especially in children, an extension project was created in 2014, called "Promoting the health of children through music and educational activities" in the nursing department of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul. The aim was to promote children's health by using music as a way of seeking a healthy life, providing opportunities to decrease idle time, and to enhance moments of mutual learning, culture and leisure through choral singing. After positive results were obtained in the development of activities, this experience report was developed, with the aim of sharing the experience of the extension project "Promoting the health of children through music and educational activities", discussing the role of music in promoting health, in light of the existing literature, revealing the contributions that the choir provides in the development and health of school children. There is scarce scientific literature on this subject in the area of nursing, as well as the importance of sensitizing nurses and other healthcare professionals to the use of music in their practice of caring for others and for themselves.

**Keywords:** Child; Music; Health; Health Promotion; Nursing; Community-Institutional Relations.

#### RESUMO

Considerando a importância da música na saúde das pessoas, em especial na infância, em 2014 foi criado o projeto de extensão "Promovendo a saúde da criança através da música e ações educativas", do curso de Enfermagem, da Universidade Federal Fronteira Sul. O objetivo foi promover a saúde da criança a partir da utilização da música, em busca de uma vida saudável, oportunizando a diminuição de tempo ocioso, bem como momentos de aprendizado mútuo, cultural e lazer por meio do canto coral. E após evidenciar resultados positivos no desenvolvimento das atividades, surgiu então esse relato de experiência, com o intuito de compartilhar a experiência do projeto de extensão "Promovendo a saúde da criança através da música e ações educativas". Discutiu-se a atuação da música na promoção da saúde, à luz da literatura já existente, desvelando as contribuições que o canto coral proporciona no desenvolvimento e na saúde das crianças em idade escolar. Constatou-se escassa produção científica sobre a temática na área da enfermagem, bem como a importância de sensibilizar enfermeiros e demais profissionais da saúde para o uso da música na sua prática de assistir o outro e a si próprio.

**Palavras-chave:** Criança; Música; Saúde; Promoção da Saúde; Enfermagem; Relações Comunidade-Instituição.

#### RESUMEN

Teniendo en cuenta la importancia de la música en la salud de las personas, especialmente en los niños, en 2014 fue creado el proyecto de extensión "Promoción de la salud de los niños a través de la música y las actividades educativas" del curso de Enfermería de la Universidad Federal Fronteira Sul. El proyecto se ha propuesto promover la salud de los niños mediante el uso de la música en busca de una vida saludable, proporcionando oportunidades para disminuir el tiempo ocioso, así como momentos de aprendizaje mutuo, cultural y de entretenimiento a través del canto. Con este relato de experiencia se ha buscado compartir la experiencia del mencionado proyecto una vez que ha mostrado resultados positivos en el desarrollo de las actividades. Se discute el papel de la música en la promoción la salud, a la luz de la literatura existente, revelando las contribuciones del canto al desarrollo y salud de los niños en edad escolar. Se ha constatado que hay escasa producción científica sobre el tema en el área de enfermería y se ha comprobado la importancia de sensibilizar a las enfermeras y otros profesionales de la salud para el uso de la música en la atención de los demás y para ellos mismos.

**Palabras clave:** Niño; Música; Salud; Promoción de la Salud; Enfermería; Relaciones Comunidad-Institución.

## INTRODUCTION

Health promotion has been highlighted, especially in recent decades. Based on a broad understanding of the concept of health, as well as the implementation of the Unified Health System (SUS) and discussions on the new policies in the sector, several knowledge areas have begun to structure practices towards prevention and promotion, beyond the transmission of information, in order to encourage and facilitate action. These combinations then involved the exchange of life experiences, learning, and behavioral aspects of therapeutic, international measures.<sup>1</sup>

Children are vulnerable to different situations and need to have a space to receive care, especially for health promotion, because the right to health is a constitutional right of every citizen. One of the ways to promote children's health is using music, which has gradually been being inserted in nursing care, and can be used as an instrument to provide comfort, reduce pain, facilitate communication and the professional-health user relationship, making care more humanized, with positive effects on children, both in leisure and by strengthening emotional and social attachment.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, since ancient times, music has been used by civilizations as a means to cure diseases, and has been present in various cultural events. Music is one of the most important forms of human expression; making music is a tool for communication and expression, through improvisation, composition and interpretation. There is the need for concentration and involvement in the proposed activities. Music can enhance the emotional expressiveness of the individual, facilitating communication and interpersonal relationships, as well as promoting acceptance and establishing relationships and attachment, increasing self-esteem and providing comfort and well-being.<sup>2</sup>

Music also has great therapeutic potential, leading to positive outcomes on blood pressure levels of individuals in different clinical situations, also acting to reduce anxiety levels, pain and aid in relaxation.<sup>3</sup> One can also cite the benefits of music therapy in patients with cerebral palsy, contributing to learning, communication, expression and motor development.<sup>4</sup>

In the rehabilitation context, music is a low-cost, non-pharmacological, non-invasive intervention, which can contribute to the development and health of children, families and workers who are in hospitals. Music is a highly valued art, used for self-expression, with the aim of arousing several emotions in the listeners and singers, depending on the moment. There are many studies in music therapy that prove the effectiveness of this therapeutic effect in curing various diseases, because it interferes with physical, mental and emotional health of the individual, and can improve sleep, mood and alleviate anxiety and stress.<sup>5</sup> However, in addition to the benefits to physical health,

music also positively impacts mental health, and there may be the feeling of welcoming, attentive listening, and provision of space for externalizing emotions, also considering the decrease in agitation and improved psychological well-being.<sup>6</sup>

Music has been recognized by a growing number of experts as one of the most important areas of knowledge to be studied in child development. Learning music contributes to cognitive, psychomotor, emotional and affective development, especially for the construction of personal and social values not only of children, but also of young people and adults, improving cognitive agility and the ability to manage conflicting information.<sup>5</sup>

Among the various possibilities for musical works, choir is a vehicle for disseminating the benefits attributed to music, such as more socialization, resourcefulness, teamwork, helping to organize and synchronize work, fun, communication, concentration (self-discipline), and self-confidence of the members participating in the activity.<sup>7</sup> The choir is an extremely interesting practice, able to provide many positive effects on the quality of life of those involved, such as psychological well-being, strengthened self-esteem, social interaction and maintaining memory.<sup>8</sup>

The choir also brings people together, and this approach allows them to establish friendly relationships, a hierarchy, human values and interdependent social roles. The practice of choral singing, in addition to developing musicality, self-control and many other capabilities, is an enabler of harmonizing social relations in various levels.<sup>9</sup>

The fact is that music has benefits for individuals at any age, and can promote the health of children, in line with the extension project "Promoting the health of children through music and educational activities", developed by undergraduate nursing department of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), in partnership with a state school in Chapecó, SC. This project was created with the aim of promoting children's health by using music to seek a healthy life, providing opportunities for the reduction of idle time as well as moments of mutual learning, culture and leisure through choral singing.

Envisioning positive results for the experience of the project participants, the literature was searched for the importance of music as an instrument in promoting children's health. There was scant literature production found on the subject in nursing, which encouraged us to write, research and disseminate such practice. In this context, this article aims to share the experience of the extension project, "Promoting the health of children through music and educational activities", discussing the impact of performing music on health promotion, in light of the existing literature, and unveiling the contributions that choir provides to the development and health of school children.

## PATH TAKEN

### TAKING ACTION: FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

In early 2014, after approval of the extension project, "Promoting the health of children through music and educational activities", by the UFFS, meetings were first held with the directors of the Professor Valesca CR Parisotto Basic Education School, in Jardim America, in Chapecó, SC, where it was decided to include school children from the second to the sixth years of elementary school who wished to voluntarily participate in choir at school.

The first rehearsal occurred, with the participation of about 40 choristers. The choristers had permission from their parents, and participated in weekly rehearsals and performances, conducted by the nurse and project coordinator, a professor in the nursing department at UFFS.

### UNVEILING THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE ACTION

In order to present and discuss the experiences of choral singing in the promotion of children's health, a literature review was performed by using secondary data collection in books and, especially, in articles published in published scientific journals available in electronic databases, by combining the following descriptors: child; music; health; health promotion; nursing.

Choral singing is often viewed as only a practice of music education. However, it has great potential for other educational aspects, because it also consists of a space of social coexistence. Some studies cite other aspects, considering choir as a group of musical learning, vocal development, integration and social inclusion, consisting of different interpersonal relationships and learning.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to these aspects, choral singing can also be used as an instrument of health promotion and education in health.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the extension project used choral singing as a means to attract the children for a fun, healthy, educational and cultural activity in which, in addition to teaching music, integrative choreographies were also used, drawing the attention of choristers during rehearsals, and the general public during performances at various locations in the city of Chapecó, SC.

The mental and motor development of the children benefited because, when the musicianship and singing are integrated with and accompanied by gestures and body movements, as occurred in the project activities, the systems of language, memory and sequential ordering, among others, can be activated because the child must be looked at as a whole. The body cannot be separated from the mind and emotions.<sup>5</sup>

Studies show that music influences the mood and physical health of individuals. That is the reason why it can say be

stated that there are emotional (cognitive functions), and behavioral (improved mood, sleep, motivation, self-confidence, decreased anxiety, aid in fighting tension and elimination of stress) benefits, The power that music has in terms of memory is impressive. Accompanying the music with gestures and body movements, the child is likely to have at least six of his brain systems stimulated, providing a rich form of learning, motivation and neural development.<sup>5</sup>

### THE DYNAMICS OF CHARMING CHOIR REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCES

In the first month of the project, the choir's name was chosen by the participants themselves, through democratic voting. It was named, "Charming Choir", and the kids really sang and enchanted the public during the year of 2014.

The rehearsals occurred weekly in the late afternoon, so that children studying in the morning and evening periods could participate in the project. The dynamics of the rehearsals followed the structure of vocal warming, discussion of the song lyrics, so as to start singing and learning new songs or remember those already rehearsed within the choir repertoire, ending with communications and taking attendance of the members. For this purpose, there was the support of images and lyrics projected via a data show, as well as a recording of the keyboard music.

In the first month of the project the performances at school began, and then they were invited to sing at various festivals in the municipality and at the municipal theater, mall, public places and events at UFFS itself. Therefore, not only were the rapid projection and acceptance of the project by the whole community evidenced, but especially the talent, new opportunities achieved, and the growth of the children, who amounted to approximately 55 choristers at the end of the year. No vacancies were opened in the choir, because the physical space of the rehearsals could not admit more people, and also due to the lack of resources to acquire other uniforms, and lack of space in the transportation bus.

It should be noted that in the out of school performances, the transportation of children was under the responsibility of those who invited "Charming Choir" to sing. In the development of this project, with the support of parents, school and university staff, the first uniforms for the "Charming Choir" were purchased, providing more organization to performances.

### SHARING THE BENEFITS OF THE EXTENSION PROJECT

Benefits were notable for the children participating in the project, who had the opportunity to express feelings in the choir, to have fun with lyrics and body language, to learn to get

along and respect colleagues, to visit new places, and to continuously have new experiences in each performance, with different audiences. Reflection upon the rehearsed and performed songs was also obtained, which were precisely chosen due to their educational lyrics, covering topics on healthy living, citizenship, caring for the planet, love of neighbor, and self-esteem. Before beginning each song, the lyrics were discussed in groups.

In addition to these benefits, the project also provided a way to avoid idleness in the children, assisting in the removal of several vulnerabilities of the children, especially because they live in a poor neighborhood lacking financial and leisure resources, health instructions, cultural expressions, among others factors. This project, in such a community, was extremely important because it provided an opportunity to fill some of these gaps in the lives of the participating children.

The role of nursing in this extension project was essential, because it is a profession that works strongly with interpersonal relationships, performing actions in the primary, secondary and tertiary health levels. Nursing is a unique profession in promoting health among socially vulnerable groups, such as in the case of the children in this project, in addition to working cooperatively with other professionals, constantly seeking to improve the quality of care and the struggle for the consolidation of SUS principles, from the perspective of integrality and humanization in care.

### THE CONTINUITY OF THE PROJECT IN THE COMMUNITY

It can be stated that music, as an instrument in promoting the health of children involved in the project, was extremely effective. At the completion of the activities, at the end of 2014, the president of the Parents' and Teachers' Association (PTA), the school principal, and also the children with their families sought out those responsible for the project (professor and nursing students) urgently requesting the permanence of the choir, highlighting its importance and impact in the community.

Thus, by achieving the proposed aims and, given the amazing results, the same extension project was resubmitted in 2015 and 2016, seeking continuity of the activities. In April of 2015, the second edition of the project was approved by UFFS, to the delight of everyone involved, continuing the actions undertaken in pursuit of healthy living in childhood.

Importantly, the children's choir can be an important instrument not only for the health care of the children, but also for the health of their families and community. That is because the proximity of health care professionals, through musical works, allows for a certain "openness" to more closely knowing the reality of the whole family. The children participating in the choir also involved their families, especially parents and guardians, who were invited to attend rehearsals and especially the

performances, providing opportunities for the whole family to visit new locations where they had never been before within the municipality. It should be reinforced that family relationships are fundamental to the personal, social and ethical development of children, as well as for the structuring of their healthy living.

Thus, choir singing is community work that benefits everyone involved, especially the singers, agreeing with the well-known expression: "Sing away sorrow, cast away care.", by the character Don Quixote, by Miguel de Cervantes. The actions, during 2014, are believed to move from the school into the house of each chorister, helping promote the health of children involved in the project, as well as their families and community.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

By analyzing the path taken by the extension project as well as its difficulties and achievements, the importance of integration between the university community and the school community is highlighted. With the support, respect and sincere search for an integrative and interdisciplinary activity, many objectives were achieved on behalf of the healthy living of children. It is clear that there is no ready recipe for an extension project to work successfully, but certainly one of its main ingredients is the existence of interaction between the parties involved in the process.

During the development of the project it became clear that the playful moment promoted by music can be an important resource not only for the care of each other, but for self-care to promote relaxation, well-being and pleasure to be with oneself and with others. The pursuit of pleasure and concern for quality of life are valued as they favor the desire of the other, expanding the vision of what is considered a care system.

Therefore, the music is an important tool in seeking healthy living. During one year of the *Charming Choir's* development, an opportunity to promote self-knowledge, reflection and perception of others was available, which were important aspects of personal development and social integration. With music integrated into the care, the vision of the health care project leaders could be broadened, as well as being an important resource to humanize the educational process, by turning it into something pleasurable, fun and healthy.

For nursing students, the development of the project provided an opportunity for better knowledge and more personal, scientific and technical growth, with interdisciplinary actions, that brought a broader and more critical look toward health promotion. However, one of the barriers in this move was the difficulty in finding current literature on music as a performance tool for health promotion in nursing, leaving the invitation for other reflections and studies on this issue. Nurses, as well as other health care professionals, must be sensitized to the use of music in the practice of caring for others and oneself.

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