

*Significant moments in improvisational music therapy as identified through heart rate data: A case study from the No Pain No Gain randomised controlled trial*

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Abstract:

In this presentation, we will illustrate how heart rate data collected during music therapy sessions can serve to identify meaningful moments in therapy.

We will be using the case of a client who participated in the on-going NPNG study, a randomised controlled trial of improvisational music therapy for adults with depression conducted at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

We chose this particular client for three reasons: she presented very distinct heart rate variability (HRV) patterns that corresponded to specific therapeutic activities, she substantially improved in terms of depression scores, and one of us (JE) acted as the therapist. After briefly introducing the NPNG study, we will explain what those moments identified through HRV correspond to, and describe the other types of data we have used for their interpretation and evaluation (video data, music data analysed with Music Therapy Toolbox, client history, and the thematic content of the verbal exchanges).

Lastly, we will discuss whether HRV can be used to isolate meaningful moments of the therapy process, and to what extent other data sources support and complement the HRV findings.