Music Therapy in Hospice Care  
Presented at the Iowa Hospice Organization conference, November 18, 2008

What is Music Therapy?
According to the American Music Therapy Association, “Music therapy is an established healthcare profession that uses music to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals of all ages. Music therapy improves the quality of life for persons who are well and meets the needs of children and adults with disabilities or illnesses.”

How are music therapists qualified?
Music therapists complete a four year bachelor degree in music therapy. This includes a six month clinical internship and sitting for the board certification examination. Advanced degrees and specialized training are also available.

How can hospice patients benefit from music therapy?
Patients who need assistance with decreasing anxiety and perception of pain, developing coping skills, gaining spiritual support, identifying and expressing emotions, engaging in life review, improving communication skills, improving relaxation skills, decreasing restlessness and agitation. Music therapy also provides opportunity for leisure, sensory stimulation and orienting to reality.

How can families and caregivers benefit from music therapy?
Music therapy can provide relief and respite for caregivers, a forum to share common experiences and enjoyment together, meaningful time spent together in a positive and creative way, assist in communication, relaxation for all, spiritual support, and bereavement.

What do music therapists do?
Music therapists design individualized music experiences to address an individual’s care plan. Examples include listening to music, singing, reminiscing, active music making, relaxation paired with music, music to facilitate special moments with a caregiver, spiritual reflection, etc.

How will music therapy services be provided?
Music therapy will be provided for Hospice of Central Iowa by referral. During the initial session, an assessment will determine music therapy needs and if the patient will benefit from further music therapy services. The music therapist will function as part of the interdisciplinary team by addressing goal areas on the patients’ care plans.

For more information about music therapy, visit the website of the American Music Therapy Association at www.musictherapy.org.
Music Therapy in Hospice Care, cont.

How can I use music with patients?
- Provide music listening opportunities
  - Listen with them
- Share a song, a memory of music
- Ask about their musical background, tell them about yours
  - Sing for them or with them
- Sing or play recorded music to distract them or assist them with daily cares or assessments
  - Talk with them about music, artists, musicals
  - Ask them about concerts or shows they have attended
- With patients who may have some confusion, talk about seasonal songs for reality orientation

How can I use music to improve my life?
- Listen to music...
  - In the car
  - At home
  - While getting ready for the day
  - While winding down from the day
  - Between work/volunteering and home
  - During exercise
    - To relax
    - To help with sleeping
      - Sing, whistle, hum...
        - In the shower
        - In the car
        - In a choir
        - Play...
  - Play, learn a musical instrument
  - Buy new music
  - Share your music with a friend, go to a concert
  - Use music to help you remember — as a mnemonic device
    - While preparing a meals
    - To remember a patient, family member or friend