Music Therapy in Inpatient Pediatric Palliative and Hospice Care:
Special Considerations for Patients and Families

Music Therapy is an important therapy intervention for pediatric patients and their families in end-of-life care, supporting overall goals of hospice and palliative care: to provide relief from pain and alleviate suffering; to offer spiritual, psychosocial, and emotional support; to provide opportunities for affirmation of life while also acknowledging the dying process; to support families’ bereavement processes. Depending on their developmental stage, children often don’t understand their illness and the need for tests, procedures, and medications; music therapy can provide nonverbal support and comfort. Emotional expression through music is encouraged with patients and with families who are often plagued with feelings of guilt, anxiety, and perceived helplessness. This presentation will demonstrate how a music therapist implements songwriting, singing, instrumental play, and other music therapy techniques in age-appropriate ways to transform pathology into creativity, and to support the families of children in hospice care.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Participants will be able to identify unique areas of need for pediatric palliative and hospice patients and their family members

2. Participants will be able to identify Music Therapy techniques and interventions specific to inpatient pediatric hospice and palliative care.

BIO: Pamela Carlton holds a Master’s degree in music therapy from Molloy College, where she teaches in the Music Therapy undergraduate and graduate programs. She also currently practices as a hospice music therapist and has a background in psychiatric music therapy, and medical music therapy, where she worked with hospitalized children. Pam also works in private practice with persons recovering from traumatic brain injury, and women recovering from addiction and codependency.