



## **“A Dose of Music a Day Keeps Pain at Bay”**

*by Dr. Sharon Chong Yin Zi, MSMM President*

In conjunction with the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)'s Annual Neurofair 2013 organized by the UPM's Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences held on 11-12 June 2013, The Malaysian Society for Music in Medicine (MSMM) was invited to give a public educational and awareness talk on the role of music in managing pain. On behalf of the Society, MSMM President, Dr. Sharon Chong Yin Zi gave an introductory overview of the role of music medicine and music therapy as a complementary approach in pain management.



*(Photo courtesy of UPM Neurofair 2013)*

Since human antiquity, music has been used as therapy and as medicine among indigenous cultures in many parts of the world throughout time. During the talk, it was mentioned on how the ancient physician, musicologist and mathematician, Pythagoras, in more than 400 BC, discovered mathematical ratios of all musical intervals that form the basis of our modern musical diatonic scale. This was demonstrated to the audience on the frets of a guitar.



*(Photo courtesy of UPM Neurofair 2013)*

With sprouting evidences on how music affects our bodily systems, the belief that music plays a supportive complementary role in various clinical settings has been much researched upon in the recent decades. Thus, the various components of music medicine, i.e. sound therapy/healing, vibroacoustic therapy, Indian ragas, music thanatology and the use of therapeutic music are slowly emerging as an integral part of today's mind-body medicine – a concept of physical health as influenced by the power of thoughts and emotions.

In the aspect of pain management, numerous music medicine and music therapy studies have shown substantial positive effects in various disciplines, from chronic/neuropathic pain, labour pain, surgical/procedural

pain and psychosomatic pain. Through various models of neurochemical and psychophysiological pathways studied, music has been shown to ameliorate pain as the end result, either by distraction or by relaxation, i.e. reducing level of stress, fear and anxiety. A variety of musical instruments deemed 'therapeutic' have been used, e.g. guitar, harp, flute, or even local traditional instruments suitable to cultural background. Hence, these were demonstrated at this session which was conducted in the afternoon, whereby audience were initially aroused from a state of after-lunch drowsiness, using the violin on an upbeat R&B version of Pachelbel's Canon in D at the commencement of the talk.



*(Photo courtesy of UPM Neurofair 2013)*

Towards the end of the talk, a brief insight on music medicine and music therapy practice worldwide, as well as development of music medicine and music therapy in Malaysia was also covered. Vocal demonstration with guitar accompaniment of a slow relaxing tune 'Edelweiss', featured in the musical "The Sound of Music" was given as an example of familiar tunes used in elderly hospice care. On the other hand, a lively Malay folksong 'Rasa Sayang' was subsequently demonstrated as being a useful tune, particularly amongst younger age group of Malaysian population. The session ended with a demonstration of the soothing timbre of the flute on the familiar all-time favourite of Elton John's 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight', which is the theme song from Walt Disney's cartoon movie 'The Lion King'.



*(Photo courtesy of UPM Neurofair 2013)*

Response was positive from the audience with many who voiced up interest in helping to promote the Society's aims and objectives. It is hoped that through educational talks and voluntary live music-making for therapeutic purposes to begin with, MSMM will be able to achieve its goal of creating awareness of such therapeutic modalities, not only among the general public but healthcare policy makers as well so as to integrate Music Medicine into our current healthcare system, be it as a tool for maintenance of well-being or an adjunct therapeutic tool for treating medical conditions.