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**Action Research: Improving my music therapy practice with
hospitalised adolescents through building relationships
and meeting their developmental needs**

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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*“**Medicine** at its best is based on **relationship** and **connection**, on opening to the vulnerability of the other and moving into that vulnerability in order to respond to the person who inhabits it... It is not about requiring the other to move towards us in search of care, in search of responsiveness. Rather, it is about **equipping those who provide care with the tools, the spirit**, to move into the place of vulnerability that is inhabited by the sick person.”*

(Clarke, as cited in Arnason, 2006, p.16)

Abstract

This study examines the researcher's music therapy intervention with hospitalised adolescents within a paediatric hospital. The hospital is located in a New Zealand city serving a broad multicultural population of mainly Pākehā, Māori and Pacific Island people. There is a large body of literature showing that experiences of hospitalisation are often unpleasant and that the challenges adolescents encounter during hospitalisation can also be detrimental to their development. The researcher employed an action research model of cycles of planning, action and reflection to explore the potential for practice improvement in meeting the needs of hospitalised adolescents. In addition, young people's feedback on the sessions and input from supervisors also contributed to the researcher's planning. Personal goals in clinical practice and specific planning for the needs of individual participants were the starting points of each cycle. Subsequently, each cycle had a learning analysis to relate planning to action and to collect the knowledge for the next cycle or future practice. The researcher found that through scrutiny of her clinical work she was able to improve her professional practice. The findings also showed that relationship-building through music therapy was able to support the developmental needs of hospitalised adolescents.

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