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Sick children use music to cope with serious illness

Music Therapy Week 13-17 July

For patients at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and The Children's Hospital at Westmead, there is a special type of medicine that helps to alleviate the pain and anxiety normally experienced during treatment. That medicine is called music.

Music has long been recognised for its calming and relaxing abilities on the human body but it also has significant therapeutic benefits for sick children and Music Therapists across the state are constantly trying to find new and innovative ways to deliver this.

This July, Music Therapists at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and The Children's Hospital at Westmead will be celebrating Music Therapy Week to raise awareness about the vital role music can play in aiding the treatment, recovery and healing process.

The week will include talent quests at both Hospitals, which will be open to staff, families and patients alike, as well as musical performances by special guests.

Music Therapy programs at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and The Children's Hospital at Westmead use music as a tool to help children cope with their illness, deal with the stress and anxiety associated with being in hospital, distract from pain and give children an outlet to freely express their emotion.

"Music Therapy is about building resilience through music. We use music as a means of distraction during challenging treatments, as a way for children to explore skills and the unfamiliar Hospital environment, and as a tool to develop positive memories, this is particularly important when it comes to palliative patients. I'm inspired everyday by children's connection to music and feel privileged to be able to facilitate this to help them cope during tough times," said Matt Ralph, Music Therapist at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

Music Therapy is often delivered through instrument playing, song writing and composition, singing and performance and creative improvisation. Innovations in technology have also given Music Therapists the power to engage children through musical applications on iPads, where children are able to be involved with all aspects of music development, from composition through to performing.

"Through Music Therapy we are able to make a very special connection with a child, no matter what their age or condition, and we are able to offer them a medicine that they actually enjoy taking. This makes the world of difference," Roxanne McLeod, Music Therapist at The Children's Hospital at Westmead said.

Music Therapy Week will run from 13-17 July.

For more information, please contact:

Nikkie Beltran, Public Affairs, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick 9382 4818
Sarah Palmer, Public Relations, The Children's Hospital at Westmead 9845 0512