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# Meaning-making processes in music therapy clinical improvisation: An arts-informed qualitative research synthesis

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*Background:* Although clinical improvisation continues to be an important focus of music therapy research and practice, little attention has been given to integrating qualitative research in this area.

*Objective:* To profile, synthesize and present qualitative research authored by music therapists focused on clinical improvisation.

*Methods:* Qualitative research synthesis (QRS) uses qualitative methods to analyse, synthesize and interpret the results from a select group of qualitative studies, further enhanced by an arts-related re-presentation of the synthesis (Ai-QRS).

*Discussion:* When viewed as a whole, the synthesis revealed three dimensions that were central to the ways music therapists and clients engaged in improvisational practices: professional artistry, the performative act, and meaning making. Each element is explored and exemplified through the selected papers, and discussed within a larger theoretical framework.

*Conclusions:* Therapists use complex frameworks through which they attempt to make meaning from improvisational experiences. Implications for theory and practice are discussed, along with reflections on data re-presentation and interpretation, explored through the lens of arts-informed inquiry.

**Keywords:** qualitative research synthesis, arts-informed research, improvisation, theory development

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