



musiConnects is happy to report on its successful month-long music residency at Mattapan Community Health Center this spring. Harvard Musical Association's support enabled musical and relational impacts for musiConnects, Health Center patients and staff, and other members of the Mattapan community.

musiConnects' Resident Musicians performed throughout the month of March: on March 9th, 19th, 23rd, and 26th. Two of the events were performances by Boston Public Quartet, and two of the events were performances by Sumner Trio (typically Sumner Quartet, but after a hand injury, the ensemble was able to pivot for this residency). Each of musiConnects' performance groups gave one performance in the main lobby, and one in the upstairs waiting room space.

musiConnects staff worked closely with Health Center staff to determine times and locations that best fit the needs of the center. While initially starting from a "Music of Spring: for the young and young-at-heart" performance theme, the musicians were able to tailor the types of pieces and the amount of interaction with listeners to each location within the health center, and made adjustments to improve the fit throughout the month-long residency.

Performances in the downstairs lobby were more visible to the public, with many people coming and going, with a number of visitors showing interest in interacting with the groups by asking about the musicians, the organization, and music being played. The upstairs waiting room on the other hand, was more intimate, with patients, visitors and performers physically closer together. At times, this space was very full, and the musicians found that different types of interaction — not necessarily spoken, but instead, offering a number of small instruments for kids to touch and try out in between pieces — were most comfortable for families waiting in the space. Both performance spaces proved to have an extremely wide range of generations,

backgrounds, and languages spoken.

While these musical performances came as an unexpected surprise for many listeners at the health center, music and health are intrinsically tied together. Hearing is widely understood to be the sense that stays with us the longest. Music has been shown to be able to alter moods, reduce stress, and can even help to reduce chronic pain\*.

As discussed in our proposal, musiConnects took inspiration from Shelter Music's feedback forms by using different facial expression charts for audience members to indicate any changes in mood and/or wellbeing they felt before and after the performance. We developed our own version of a feedback survey, in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole, that also offered options for comments and suggestions for improvement (see attached form). Via these comments, we learned that most listeners (other than Health Center staff) were hearing musiConnects for the first time during these performances.

Listeners circled the moods that they felt before versus after the concert. These answers have been collated below. As you can see, while listeners reported feeling a wide range of emotions prior to a concert, 100% of the emotions reported after the concert were in the positive category. The most common ones felt post-concert were “peaceful” and “relaxed,” which of course, are not typical in any health center waiting area.

	Before the concert	After the concert
Peaceful	1	9
Awake	1	1
Happy	3	6
Calm	2	4
Hopeful	3	2
Relaxed	1	8
Stress Free	0	3
Energized	1	2
Scared	1	0
Angry	1	0
Anxious	1	0
Tired	4	0
Stressed	2	0
Bored	1	0
Sad	0	0
Hopeless	0	0
Other: ‘Meh’	1	0

The following were anonymous responses to the question, “How did this music change your day?”

- *It made me take a mind break. See the other side of what could be.*
- *Even before I come to lobby, just hearing them makes me feel so happy.*
- *This is a gift to all. Music therapy helps in ways that medicine cannot, great collaborative.*
- *It was nice to see something different in the clinic.*

- *It put me in a better mood. Very relaxing and entertaining.*
- *The music is so calming and relaxing. Wish they can follow me everywhere.*
- *Sounds better LIVE*

Facebook Live was used to livestream some aspects of these performances to a wider audience of listeners. This enabled the Health Center collaboration to become part of the broader story that musiConnects tells to its audiences about what it means to be “in residence” in the community it serves.

Through the Mattapan Health Center Residency, our Resident Musicians were able to learn and grow as performers and programmers. musiConnects was also able to strengthen and build new ties with this historical and current center of Mattapan community life. We envision this collaboration becoming model that we use again both at the Health Center and in other sites relevant to our constituency.

\*Music and health, *Harvard Men's Health Watch*,  
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/music-and-health>