

DOES SINGING PROVIDE HEALTH BENEFITS?

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Background

Amateur choir singing is a common recreational activity in adulthood, which requires only moderate musical training. Previous research suggests a variety of psychological and physiological effects of choir singing. In particular, significant changes of emotional state as well as increases of specific immune functions have been observed in previous studies.

Aims

The main purpose of this study was to assess the emotional and neurohumoral effects of choir singing. The research question asked whether and to what extent emotional and endocrine responses were attributable to active singing or passive listening to choir music.

Method

Thirty-one participants (23 female, 29 to 74 years of age) were subjected to two conditions, namely active singing versus passive listening (pre-post-design). Measures of emotional effect as well as samples of saliva, for the assessment of secretory immunoglobulin A (sIgA) and cortisol, were taken from each individual.

Results

Significant changes in both subjective and physiological measures were observed. With respect to active singing, there were significant increases in positive and decreases in negative emotional state. SigA significantly increased, whereas mean cortisol values were not affected by singing. Increases of negative emotional state were found in the passive listening condition. Significant decreases of cortisol were found also in this condition, while mean levels of sIgA were unchanged.

Conclusions

These results suggest differentiated neurohumoral responses to choir singing. Taken together, these preliminary results confirm and extend previous findings of positive emotional and immunogenetic effects of group singing.