

THERAPEUTIC POTENTIALITY OF PANEURHYTHMY

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The first task of science is to present such a knowledge that will ensure people's health.

Beinsa Douno (Petar Deunov)

I. Introduction

The Paneurhythmy is a Bulgarian system of rhythmic musical physical exercises. The Paneurhythmy has been present in the Bulgarian cultural life for more than 70 years. Its aim is to have a wholesome effect on the psychophysical condition and to improve the quality of life. Since it is accessible to everybody and very enjoyable to practise the number of people in Bulgaria who exercise Paneurhythmy has rapidly increased during the last years.

The Paneurhythmy is an unique combination of music, movements, thought, speech, philosophy and interaction with nature. That's the reason why it has much in common with music therapy, kinesitherapy, positive psychotherapy, art-therapy, pedagogy, philosophy, etc. During the last couple of years the Paneurhythmy has been studied by specialists from different scientific fields. Their studies unveil interesting directions in respect to the effect of Paneurhythmy, this unique Bulgarian system of exercises.

II. Characteristic features of the exercises of Paneurhythmy and their positive effect:

SPECIAL FEATURE	RESULT
1. Relatively slow and always smooth and light movements	Practically, no traumatic injuries, a conscious control over the movements.
2. Rhythmic performance	Easier to master. Easier to bear the physical exertion. Development of the natural feeling for rhythm.
3. Specific gait (always stepping on your toes first)	Easing the microscopic shakes during the locomotion. A different, not typical activity of the lower extremity's muscles.
4. Music is a key element in the exercises	Emotional involvement. Heightened interest. Aesthetic effect.
5. Poetic text and basic philosophical idea for each exercise.	The purely mechanical execution of the exercises is avoided. There are conditions for the mind to be active all the time.
6. Playing in the open air , on a flat area and close to the beautiful nature.	Additional by the agents of nature and its aesthetic impact.

7. Group performance (approximate number of participants: from 10 to 500-1000 and more).	Very good conditions for development of team-working skills. Social contacts.
8. Playing in couples who are situated in a circle or constitute a multitude of groups of 10 or 12 people who are arranged in more complex figures.	Higher requirements towards the coordination of the personal and collective movements. Great potentiality for improvement of the concentration and the scope of attention. Forming a sense of partnership.

III. Characteristics of Paneurhythm as a complex set of exercises

1. **Duration:** overall – about 70 minutes, play time – approx. 60 minutes. Total movement of the lower extremities during the entire set - about 63 minutes. Total movement of the upper extremities during the whole set - about 51 minutes.

2. **Intensity:** The exercises have aerobic features and, for players in good condition of the body, the intensity is low. The physical exertion is **constant**; therefore it is possible and easy to estimate the strain bearability in the cases of players who have health problems.

3. **Tempo.** The pace of performance is slow and even.

4. **Initial position:** The initial and constant position of the body during all exercises is the standing position.

5. **By form and character**, all exercises are:

- active exercises;
- gymnastic, locomotory, resemble dance (though they are not dancing);
- they involve almost all the muscles and joints in the human body and keep balanced the number of upper extremities' movements while improving the locomotion.

6. **By physiological characteristics**, the exercises are:

- cyclic, conventional, rhythmic;
- mainly isotonic for the muscles of the limbs and predominantly isometric for the muscles of the spinal column and the abdominal wall.

7. **Applicability:**

The Paneurhythm is appropriate for a wide range of age groups. It is suitable not only for people of middle age but also for children because it looks like game and can easily involve them on the emotional level due to the group performance and the musical accompaniment. It is also fit for elderly people because it meets the principal methodical requirements of kinesitherapy and geriatrics.

Practising Paneurhythm is within the financial capacity of everyone: it is extremely economical and inexpensive since it does not require any special outfit, equipment or terrain.

The Paneurhythm does not discriminate against sex, age, state of health, state of readiness as most sports and fitness systems do. To the contrary, it integrates these differences and thus unites them.

IV. Ways of influence of the Paneurhythmic exercises :

- 1) The influence of **music** (sounds, melody, rhythm) – music therapy.
- 2) The impact of **nature**: fresh air, sun, ionization of air, aesthetic effect of beautiful landscapes, etc.
- 3) The influence of the **song texts**: formation of positive attitudes and mental patterns for effective coping with life.
- 4) The **Collective nature** of the exercises masters the **social skills** – the Paneurhythmy improves people's abilities for communication through developing their tolerance, patience and ability to work in a group. It also gives them the opportunity to expand the range of their social contacts.
- 5) According to BeinsaDouno – the Author of Paneurhythmy – it has a positive effect because of the **special combination between music and movements** (Douno, 1938, 2004) – *by achieving a resonance between the separate components that constitute the Paneurhythmy*, it easily intensifies the overall impression and improves significantly the whole state of the players.
- 6) Introduction of **rhythm to the physiological processes** through the rhythmic music of the exercises and by the daily practice at one and the same hour.
- 7) The effects of the **exercises upon the locomotory and the cardiovascular systems**: Paneurhythmy sets in motion the joints, stimulates the tonicity of the muscles, and improves the control over the muscles, the posture and the gait, as well as the circulation of the blood, etc.
- 8) Cultivation of certain **motional qualities and skills**: improvement of movement *coordination*, improvement of *balance*, development of sense for rhythm, increasing the stamina, strengthening particular groups of muscles, increasing the efficiency of the walk and the movements, etc.
- 9) Total impact of the components of Paneurhythmy on the **nervous system**: mental relaxation, improvement of concentration, expansion of the abilities for focusing, distributing and shifting of the attention; development of the cognitive processes such as perception, memory, thought, etc.
- 10) Total impact of the components of Paneurhythmy on the **emotional state**: easing the stress, provoking positive feelings (e.g. joy, optimism, inspiration, etc.).

V. Survey data about the effects of Paneurhythmy over people at a mature age

(Almost all of the studies concern the effects of trainings in Paneurhythmy for beginners).

Increased self-confidence (*Kangalova, 2003; Milcheva, Koleva, 2003; Chervenкова, 2004, 2009*);

Enhanced activity and heightened spirits (*Kangalova, 2003; Milcheva, Koleva, 2003; Chervenкова, 2009*);

Raised optimism (*Chervenкова, 2004*);

Improved steadiness of attention (*Michalkova et al., 2001*);

Strengthened psychological stability (*Michalkova et al., 2001*);

Improved self-esteem (*Anchev, 2003*);

Lowered anxiety (*Kalev, Djedjev, Popov, 2001*);

Improved gait - becomes smoother, lighter and more confident (*Chervenкова, 2004*);

Improved balance (*Chervenкова, 2002; 2009*);

Straightened body posture and increased rib mobility (*Chervenкова et al., 2001; 2002*);

Increased physical strength (*Chervenкова, 2004*);

Eased pain symptoms (*Kalev, Djedjev, Popov, 2001; Chervenкова, 2003*);

Reduced overweight (*Chervenкова, 2003; Alexandrova, Vulcheva, Kangaldjiev, 2003*);

Improved character of movements – they become smoother, better coordinated (*Chervenкова, 2004*);

Sound sleep (*Chervenкова, 2004*);

Relieved symptoms of chronic illnesses (*Kalev, Djedjev, Popov, 2001; Chervenкова, 2003; Alexandrova, Vulcheva, Kangaldjiev, 2003*);

Improved interpersonal relations – more patience, understanding and tolerance (*Chervenкова, 2004*);

Socialization (*Ancheva, D., 2003; Chervenкова, 2004*);

Expanded circle of social relations and overcome social isolation (*Anchev, 2003*);

Reduced state anxiety – state anxiety is a subjective feeling of distress (*Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Chervenкова, 2009*);

The training in Paneurhythmy significantly reduces depression (*Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Chervenкова, 2009*);

Enhanced feeling of subjective happiness (*Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Chervenкова, 2009*);

Significantly reduced trait anxiety (*Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Chervenкова, 2009*);

Increased satisfaction with life (*Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Chervenкова, 2009*);

Increased general self-efficacy, i.e. the subjective belief that one is capable of coping with problems and difficulties (*Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Chervenкова, 2009*);

VI. Survey data about the effects of Paneurhythmy over children

(All the undermentioned studies show the effects which Paneurhythmy has over children during their **beginner trainings**. Almost all of the listed results are obtained during the implementation of the programme “Healthy by Exercising in Nature”).

Developing characteristics of attention – sustainability and redirection (*Michalkova and colleagues, 2001*);

Increasing the capacity of short-term auditory memory (*Michalkova and colleagues, 2001*);

Increasing the rate of solving non-verbal intellectual problems (*Michalkova and colleagues, 2001*);

Reducing anxiety in children (*Boyadjieva, Yankova, Yacevich, 2005*);

Improving the self-confidence, the activity and the mood of the children who are trained in Paneurhythmy (*Boyadjieva, Yankova, Yacevich, 2007*);

Developing the sustainability and concentration of attention (*Matanova, Yankova, 2007*);

Developing the perception abilities and the defining of the body scheme - verbal and non-verbal abilities (*Matanova, Yankova, 2007*);

Developing the social skills (*Matanova, Yankova, 2007*):

- the child gets more willing to help and support others;
- the child develops the ability to interact within a group;
- building up friendly relationships, mutual support and strong emotional connection on the grounds of free willingness and spontaneous participation in the co-work.

Prevention and treatment of minor spinal deformities (*Chervenкова and colleagues, 2003*);

VII. Recommendations for practicing Paneurhythmy with regard to the theory of kinesiotherapy.

In accordance with the current methodical requirements of kinesiotherapy, the complex of Paneurhythmic exercises is suitable for being part of a complete kinesiotherapeutic program for prevention and treatment of:

- obesity: 1st and 2nd stage;
- hypertensive disease, stages I and II A;
- psychological overstrain and stress;
- mild forms of neuroses;
- fallen arches (pesplanus);
- spinal deformities – functional; as well as structural stage I;
- arthritides (in remission or such to the upper extremities in a more acute stage);
- diabetes (in the cases of compensatory state, as part of the remedial gymnastic program)
- Illnesses and conditions related to moderate disorders in the balance and in the movement coordination.

The positive effects of Paneurhythmy on health are not thoroughly examined by science yet. The practice of Paneurhythmy may well have positive effect on other illnesses. According to the definition of WHO (World Health Organization), health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. The aforementioned results of scientific studies give evidence that the activities related to Paneurhythmy contribute to the improvement of the physical, mental and social well-being. In this respect, the Paneurhythmy is an accessible, pleasant and effective physical activity which efficiently supports the maintenance and improvement of health.

"You should come to know the scientific side of Paneurhythmy. Nature likes to reach great achievements with the smallest efforts. In Paneurhythmy, the forces of mind, heart and will are made to work in harmony." Beinsa Douno (Petar Deunov)

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