



Music Therapy in Dementia

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"Music is the shorthand of emotion." – Leo Tolstoy



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Non-pharmacological methods for managing behavioural and neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia have been the focus now to improve the quality of life in these individuals. Music therapy is a cost effective, easy to implement and promising intervention in elderly with dementia syndromes including Alzheimer's disease, which is the most common cause of dementia. Research has shown that music therapy has a role in reduction of mood symptoms including depression, anxiety and agitation and recent literature also supports the beneficial role of music therapy in improving the cognitive functions including attention, orientation, memory, psychomotor speed and executive functions, especially when combined with other activities like singing,

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rhythmic movements and dancing. Hearing music has been found to increase the involvement with the environment in individuals with late stages of Alzheimer's who were disconnected from their surroundings. Music therapy is a powerful tool with acute benefits in people with dementia and its efficacy has been well established. The theories of mechanism behind this effect of music include the role of music in neuroplastic and neuro-regenerative changes; increase in the level of hormones including cortisol, testosterone and oestrogen which have a preventive role in dementia; and also, interestingly the fact that music can invoke autobiographical memories. Personalised music therapy which is adapted as per the person's preferences can

evoke positive emotions and help in controlling behavioural issues arising in individuals with dementia.¹⁻³

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