CultureCase

Group singing improves the mental health of older adults

This research was conducted by **Simon Coulton, Stephen Clift, Ann Skingley and John Rodriguez** at the **University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University and NHS Kent and Medway, UK**

Summary

Older adults who took part in a community singing group had significantly improved scores in aspects of mental health compared to those who did not participate. As a result of the singing exercises, they felt calm and peaceful, had lots of energy, felt less downhearted and low, or less anxious or depressed.

A model of participatory singing for older people

Older people (aged 60 years and over) from a range of community settings including day centres and general practices in the East Kent area were invited to take part in the study. Trained and experienced facilitators developed and delivered a 14-week, 90-minute programme consisting of songs from different eras and genres. The singing programme was developmental, progressing from single melody lines to harmonising, layering and singing in rounds. 258 adults took part in the study and completed questionnaires at the beginning as well as three months and six months after the singing groups were in operation.

The singing groups have been re-established since the study occurred

These results support the argument that meaningful, social and pleasurable activities can provide mental health benefits as identified in other studies of music therapy. The authors argue that providing opportunities for older people to meet and sing together can help to maintain and enhance the mental health

of older people in way that is both cost-effective and popular. Four of the five groups have been reinstated and membership is increasing, indicating the importance that such a group activity has for older people.

This summary is by **Tanya Graham, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

music **singing** **experiment** **elderly** **UK**

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