CultureCase

How group singing improves wellbeing for dementia patients

This research was conducted by **Sophie Lee, Desmond O'Neill** and **Hilary Moss** at the **University of Limerick** and **Trinity College Dublin, Ireland**

Summary

Dementia is a progressive and uncurable condition which not only impacts people with the disease but also their carers and wider society. It is widely acknowledged that group singing improves the wellbeing of people living with dementia. This research identified four themes that comprise the pathway to improved wellbeing via group singing: social connection (feelings of belonging and acceptance, and actively engaging in a shared pursuit); happiness and rejuvenation (feeling uplifted by the experience and seeing others in a good mood); reconnection with the self (proving to oneself and others that one can perform a valuable role); and supporting the carer/cared-for relationship (enjoying a shared activity built around particular needs).

The research is based on interviews with seven people who participated in a series of group singing sessions

Three of the interviews were with people living with dementia and four were with those caring for someone with dementia. The music sessions themselves lasted one hour and took place one morning a week. They were facilitated by a music therapist over a period of six weeks in a community arts centre.

There are important lessons for policy and health providers from this research

Group singing is one way for people in the early stages of dementia to come to terms with their diagnosis and integrate them into local services and networks.

None of this has any negative side effects and is an effective and low-cost alternative or complement to the early use of drug treatment.

Keywords

interview **wellbeing** **singing** **dementia** **Ireland**

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