



## Music To Their Ears

**Music therapy for long term care residents is gaining ground, and it has been proven to be beneficial for residents in nursing facilities and assisted living.**

**T**HE IDEA OF MUSIC AS A HEALING influence that could affect health and behavior is as least as old as the writings of Aristotle and Plato, according to the American Music Therapy Association.

As described on the organization's website, [www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org), the modern version of music therapy began after World Wars I and II when amateur and professional community musicians visited veterans' hospitals around the country to play for the thousands of patients who had suffered both physical and emotional trauma from the wars. After seeing notable physical and emotional responses to music, the hospitals began hiring musicians to play for patients.

Fast forward to the 21st century, and people of all ages are benefiting from music therapy. Long term care providers have recognized the soothing and therapeutic benefits of music and adopted programs as part of their wellness, activity, or caregiving programs.

According to the Institute for Music and Neurologic Therapy (IMNT), the majority of research over the past 40 years has focused on music perception and performance, while basic science today continues to produce promising new information about the neuroscientific effects of music.

In addition, numerous universities and clinical sites in the United States

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**Musical experience is not a prerequisite for participation in music therapy, and people from all over the country are benefiting.**

and Canada are currently involved in music and brain function research. Researchers and clinicians maintain that if specific responses to music can

be mapped and then linked to what is needed by patients to accelerate their healing, they will find new ways to apply music prescriptively to hasten

## WHAT IS MUSIC THERAPY?

According to the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function (IMNF), music therapy is “the systematic use of music, within a developing relationship between patient and therapist to restore, maintain, and improve physical, emotional, psychosocial, and neurologic function.”

According to IMNF’s website, combining exercise with a systematic application of music is one way to boost participation in therapy and aid in the rehabilitation process. Music therapy is used to awaken, rehabilitate, and heal people in the following ways:

- With Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, music, especially familiar songs, unlocks memories; participation in music improves communication and overcomes withdrawal.

- In Parkinson’s disease and other movement disorders, moving to music helps improve gait, balance, and range of motion.

- For traumatic injuries, music-assisted physical therapy improves gross and fine motor functioning, coordination, and visual and auditory perception.

- For stroke, musically assisted speech is used to treat nonfluent aphasia, one of the most common speech disorders following stroke.

- For acute and chronic pain, music therapy provides relief, induces relaxation, and eases anxiety.

- With depression, music is a powerful modality for connecting to feelings, expressing thoughts, and overcoming isolation.

recovery. IMNT believes that such research has enormous possibilities for millions of people with impairments throughout the world.

### A Therapy Tool

A continuing care retirement community in Bloomfield, Conn., has taken music therapy to a new level by using it as both a wellness and therapy tool. Duncaster Retirement Community’s innovative program was made possible through a \$10,000 grant from a local foundation.

In the dedication ceremony for the Music Enrichment Program, guest speaker Emily Pellegrino, a board-certified music therapist and co-director of Connecticut Music Therapy Services, explained that music therapy can have wide-ranging benefits for older adults, including stress reduction, pain management, and building social intimacy



and community. People don't have to have any musical ability to benefit from this type of therapy, according to Pellegrino.

One of the most powerful things music does is to bring up memories, and music will trigger memory recall. People don't even have to sing along for that to happen. They will just listen and a piece of music will evoke memories and reminiscences.

In a recent music therapy session, Pellegrino played the old classic, "You Are My Sunshine," triggering a variety of memories from those in the program, which ranged from: "That's what we sang around the campfire" and "I remember my father singing to my mother" to "That reminds me of my first date with my husband."

Residents ended up discussing what they felt in ways that they might not have been comfortable sharing had the

## MUSIC THERAPY RESOURCES

The following organizations and links give providers more information about how to implement programs:

- Institute for Music and Neurologic Function (IMNF): IMNF offers a series of programs to provide therapeutic music remotely, including one that customizes programs for nursing facilities, community-based programs, and individuals. Go to [www.imnf.org](http://www.imnf.org) or call (718) 519-5880 for more information.

- The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA): Founded in 1998, AMTA's purpose is the progressive development of the therapeutic use of music in rehabilitation, special education, and community settings. AMTA is committed to the advancement of education, training, professional standards, credentials, and research

in support of the music therapy profession. AMTA provides several mechanisms for monitoring the quality of music therapy programs, including standards of practice, a code of ethics, and the *Journal of Music Therapy*. For more information, go to: [www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org).

- Music & Memory: A nonprofit organization that brings personalized music into the lives of elderly residents through digital music technology, Music & Memory's website offers videos and testimonials that illustrate how personalized music is improving quality of life regardless of physical or mental status, how-to's for individualized music therapy, and technical support and assistance through its Well-Tuned program. For more information, go to [www.musicandmemory.org](http://www.musicandmemory.org).



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### AN IPOD AND A MISSION

**D**an Cohen's goal to bring music to all of the nation's 16,000 nursing facilities is a lofty one. But he is determined to do in a unique way—with iPods (or other MP3 players) loaded with individualized musical playlists. As executive director of Music & Memory, a nonprofit organization, Cohen's mission is well on its way to becoming a reality.

In 2006, he came up with the idea of creating iPod playlists for residents at a Long Island nursing facility after hearing a story on the radio about how the wildly popular gadgets were becoming ubiquitous. Not so for long term care residents, he discovered after conducting some research on it.

With that, Cohen set out to help residents and staff members at the nursing facility with what he knew would be a

therapeutic benefit. After the pilot confirmed his hypothesis with spectacular results, such as reduced agitation and improved mood among residents, among other things, Cohen decided to expand his idea across the country. The result today is a website ([www.musicandmemory.org](http://www.musicandmemory.org)) that offers technical support and ideas for providers and caregivers as well as ideas for how to obtain iPods.

"A new iPod Shuffle today costs \$49," says Cohen, "and now the technology allows the Shuffle to hold multiple playlists, which means they can be used by multiple residents. So if a resident with dementia needs it to help ease agitation with sundowning at 4 p.m., another resident can use it to get motivated to get out of bed."

Multiple headsets may be necessary for

hygiene purposes, Cohen notes, but they can cost as little as \$5 each. "For many, the largest expense will be for the music that is downloaded through iTunes."

Cohen recently teamed up with the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function to create a new program known as Well-Tuned. By giving providers insights into how to manage large numbers of playlists, handle music legally, and how to apply best practice outcomes to persons with a wide variety of physical, cognitive, and social situations, the program is helping Cohen reach his goal.

Well-Tuned also offers support that includes orientation and staff training.

Contact Cohen at (888) 792-2247 or at [cohen142@aol.com](mailto:cohen142@aol.com).

—Meg LaPorte

# Don't Miss the Bigger Opportunity.



music not brought them together like that. Music becomes a bridge; a commonality that allows people to open up to each other.

**Guitars, Drums, And Shakers**

The people involved in Duncaster's innovative music program also marvel at how music reconnects older people to their whole lives, not just their current ages.

Many noticed that a song can take residents back to that place where they were when they heard it; it connects residents to their whole self, their whole life.

The program has also brought residents closer together by promoting a sense of emotional well-being, especially if people participate with it on some level.

A significant portion of the residents' association budget is allocated for

music-related programs, including orchestras, pianists, big band, swing, and *a cappella* groups. At Caleb Hitchcock, Duncaster's long term care facility, four to six music programs are offered each week, including music education, sing-a-longs, and music trivia.

One of Duncaster's music therapists will start a session off with a guitar and then encourage people in the program to jump in with drums or shakers. They may come into that session without knowing the other people in the group, but by the end they will have a connection. This musical experience becomes the common element that brings them together, even if they didn't start out knowing each other when they walked into the room.

The program will allow for greater frequency and more diverse hands-on and listening music experiences and will soon include a hand-chime

choir, drum circle, and harp therapy. It is anticipated that 20 to 24 residents will take part in the hand chime choir, eventually performing for residents, family, and staff. Participation in both the choir and the drum circles will be open to anyone regardless of knowledge or ability.

Many of the drums are hand-held or can be placed on the floor in front of participants for ease of use. Participatory drumming has been shown to have positive benefits, including increased socialization, an increase in circulation, and stress relief. In addition, Duncaster will host appearances by a musical ensemble from the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

Duncaster's Music Enrichment Program is the only one of its kind in the area and expands on the retirement community's long history of music programming. ■



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