Music Therapy and Neuroscience: Opportunities and Challenges

Speaker: Julian O'Kelly PhD Honorary Research Fellow, Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability & Senior Research Fellow. Unit for Social and Community Psychiatry, East London NHS Trust Honorary Research Fellow, Queen Mary University

This lecture will feature new insights from research addressing the needs of those with complex neuro-disabilities at the RHN.

Music has the power to inspire, make us dance, smile, cry, recall poignant memories, or simply help us get through a morning run. With these dynamic effects it is no wonder that it has been a focus of interest by many disciplines interested in our psychological and physical wellbeing, particularly where music’s ability to affect brain processing may be harnessed. The last 30 years has seen the convergence of music therapists, psychologists and neuroscientists exploring how music might help assess and rehabilitate those with severe brain injuries. Here the non-verbal, recognisable and stimulating qualities of music place it uniquely well as a medium for working with those with poor arousal levels and complex communication difficulties.

A strong tradition of research in this field at the RHN has led to the development of standardised ways of using music to assess for awareness, which have been adopted internationally. Dr O’Kelly has led on a range of studies investigating the neurophysiological effects of live music therapy for these patients. He will present preliminary findings from the latest study, which supports the sustained input of music therapists whilst patients are being assessed for awareness. A combination of video, heart/respiration and electrocephalagram (EEG) data indicates music therapy promotes optimal conditions for supporting attention and arousal crucial for accurate assessment and effective rehabilitation. The implications of the findings and indications for further research will be explored in conclusion.

Thursday 14th September 2017, 4.30-5.30pm
De Lancey Lowe Room – Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability
The lectures are free, but please register online if you plan to attend as places are limited
https://mtneuroscience.eventbrite.co.uk