

A Shared Voice: Singing Groups in Neurorehabilitation

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Objectives

- The study began at the end of April 2019 and continues to the present day.
- Singing group objectives: to provide an opportunity for patients to work on their voice, communication and cognitive goals using songs and singing exercises within an emotionally containing and supportive environment.
- Patients are referred to improve varying aspects of their communication e.g. ability to voice, duration of breath, pitch range, volume of voice, reading lyrics, copying words, speech articulation, clarity and pacing of speech.



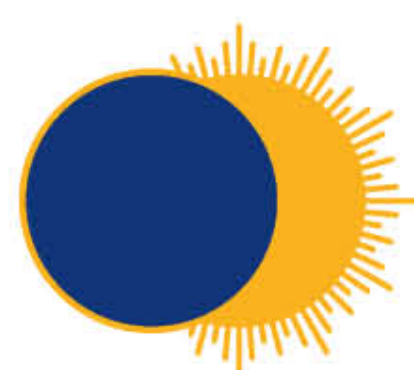
Photograph of group members July 2019

Outcomes

- Objectively, all patients appeared to have improved mood after participating in singing group. Subjectively, patients reported enjoying the group and benefitting from participating in the group.
- All patients with direct support were able to utilise strategies which improved the volume of their voice and the clarity of their speech. Ability to retrieve words and maintain attention for an extended period of time, were also seen to improve.

Future Recommendations

- Given that improvements were seen both objectively and subjectively, the group is recommended to continue.
- The presence of 1 music therapist, 1 speech and language therapist (SLT) and 1 assistant is required to maintain a high standard of individualised support. SLT is felt to be a particular requirement of the group referral process, as patients attending have clear communication goals.
- The following outcomes will also be monitored through formal and informal measures:
 - implementation of learnt group strategies with family, friends and/or other patients (functional communication)
 - Mood
 - Confidence with communication



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Rehabilitation Environment

Attendees present with a range of communication difficulties, secondary to their brain injuries of varying cause. They work, as a group, to improve individual rehabilitation goals which may include: improving clarity of speech due to dysarthria, increasing control of pitch and range, improving apraxia of speech through automatic speech. The group also provides an environment in which cognitive communication skills may be developed. This is achieved through choice making, turn taking practice, building insight, developing divided and focused attention over a period of 35-40minutes, developing more flexible thinking and ideas. Collectively, they provide emotional support for one another in their progress and challenges.

Therapeutic Techniques

- Vocal and singing warm ups
- Facial Oral Tract Therapy techniques
- Use of familiar songs and printed lyrics
- Sung rounds to exercise attention
- Oral motor respiratory exercises (OMREX)
- Rhythmic speech cueing (RSC)
- Melodic intonation therapy (MIT)
- Therapeutic singing (TS) (Thaut, 2016)

Patient Feedback

“I really enjoy it. It’s beneficial. My diction has improved.”

“I feel happier and more myself. Not someone different. Something I never do at home is singing. When my husband comes, he really enjoys it. It has helped me improve my speech and breathing. My oxygen levels on the monitor stay up.”

References

Brain Injury Service Team at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

Thaut and Hoemberg eds., 2016, Handbook of Neurologic Music Therapy, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.