

Research Poster Submission

Singing Together: The benefits of singing for older adults and caregivers

Abstract

Singing Together was part 3 of an investigation examining the benefits of choral singing on the pain, energy, and mood of cognitively impaired residents in a long-term care facility and their caregivers. Quantitative analysis indicated statistical significance for all participants for the three measures. Interview data resulted in qualitative themes indicating social, emotional and physical benefits.

Keywords: caregivers, Dementia, mood, older adults, singing

Description

Singing Together was the third part of a multi-phase investigation examining the benefits of singing with older adults in an adult daycare program (Phase 1), and in a long-term care facility (Phases 2 and 3). Phase 3 focused on residents of a long-term care facility who were diagnosed with mild to moderate cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease, and was unique in its extended scope of examining their choral participation with caregivers, or significant others. The results of this study indicate that singing in a choir has benefits in the physical, social and emotional domains. Self-reports demonstrate a statistically significant reduction in pain over the course of the study, and improvement in mood and energy were statistically significant for each participant group. Objective video ratings demonstrate significant increases in average rating of mood ($P < 0.05$) and energy. Qualitative interviews gave rise to several themes, including benefits of singing in facilitating interaction, bonding, enjoyment, energy, and motivation. Further, this study's results indicate that choral singing can have an impact on the pain, energy, and mood levels of residents in a long-term care facility who have diagnosis of mild to moderate dementia as well as for S/Os who attended the choral sessions and participated with them. For all participants, singing in a choir was associated with a decrease in levels of

perceived pain and an increase in energy and overall mood. Comments from participants, both residents and family members/significant others, demonstrate the positive impact of choral singing under the guidance of a trained music therapist. The choir setting benefited participants by promoting active participation and facilitating interaction and bonding. The leadership by an accredited music therapist helped create a positive and motivated environment, fostering a sense of both purpose and inclusion for all choir members. The choir also provided an opportunity for residents and their S/Os to interact in a fun and positive way, encouraging improved mood and attitude and reducing stress levels and agitation. Future implications include using a variety of tools to encourage participation, the importance of a trained music therapist to create a positive, engaging environment, and the value of including significant others and family members as a part of the music making experience.

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