

Personalised Music Playlists – Agitation – Dementia

“What do we know about the application of a personalised music playlist in calming agitation in the older person living with dementia in a hospital ward?”

Helen Patricia Brown, Registered Nurse, NHS Tayside



Objective: A scoping review was undertaken to research academic and grey literature of what we know about the application of a personalised music playlist in calming agitation in the older person living with dementia in the hospital environment

Methods: A systematic scoping search of the academic databases and grey literature was undertaken in September 2021. Title and abstract screening were followed by full-text reading. Coding and thematic analysis was undertaken to generate themes from the dataset.

Results: The combined search yielded 3240 results. 38 pieces of evidence were selected for this review. Six themes were generated.

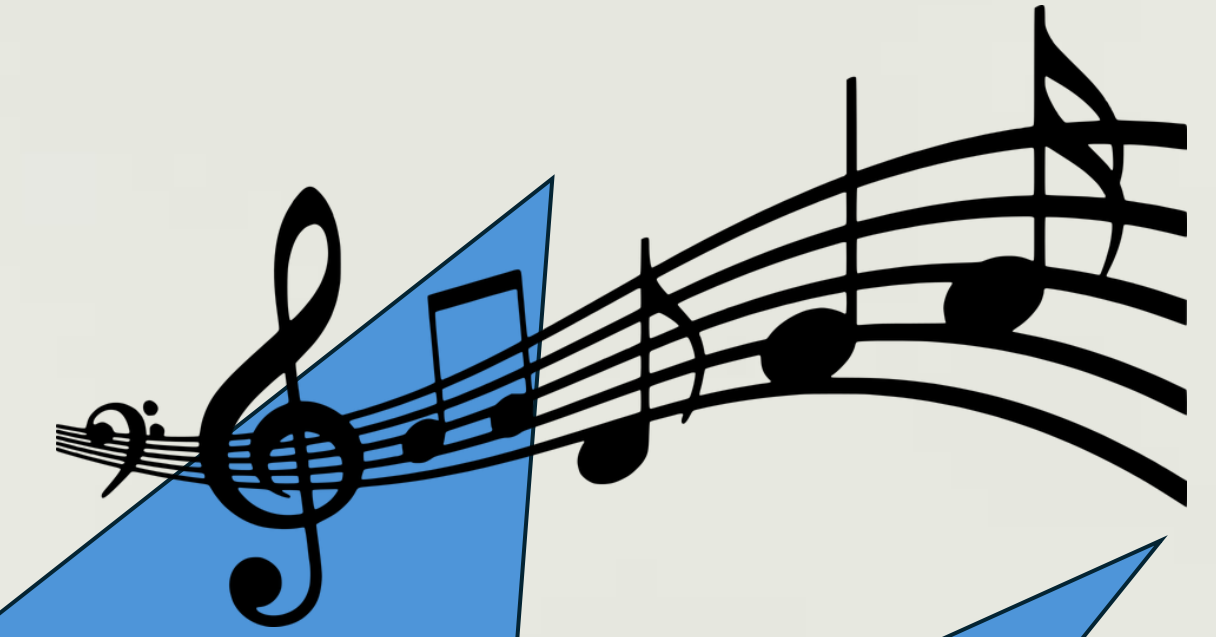
Conclusions: Individualised music playlists are generally successful in calming agitation in the older adult living with dementia. Dementia creates an added complexity in treatment as every person’s dementia journey is unique. Implementing a personalised music therapy, involves a multi-team approach between the person themselves, families and carers and the clinical team.



The Royal College of Nursing (2021) acknowledge that all nurses have a requirement to be dementia aware and that communication methods may require adjustment to tailor the needs of the person, bolstered by staff training and awareness, which government policies endorse. The NMC (2021) professional standards require that all nurses practice care which is kind, respectful and compassionate; that people are treated as individuals with their wishes considered and that treatment should be timely, appropriate and that knowledge and skills are kept up to date. Dementia awareness is relevant across all fields of healthcare and a public health priority (World Health Organisation, 2015).

Modern Equivalent of your favourite mix tape:

- Music must have personal meaning
- Music in the hospital environment must be unobtrusive, otherwise it could create agitation in others
- Use of headphones – if used, must be tolerated well
- Perhaps start considering music as medicine before you have an episode in hospital, so it is part of your routine – so that when a person living with dementia comes into hospital, the music comes with them



Reward centres in the brain are activated when one listens to music one likes

The part of the brain, which is stimulated by music, may be preserved from dementia diseases and musical memory can be maintained throughout a person’s life

Familiar songs can evoke memories, affect mood, and may pacify negative feelings

Personalised music is “music that has been integrated into a person’s life and is based on personal preference”



Themes generated from scoping literature search and findings:

1. Advantages and disadvantages of music playlists for persons living with dementia (plwd) in a hospital setting - Personalised playlists could offer a benefit in lowering agitation. Personalised playlists may be vital because of musical memory, where the prefrontal cortex of the brain is the last to be affected by dementia, enabling musical memories to be maintained. Music can have strong emotional associations, so the importance of personalising the music is essential. The data suggested no reported long-term negative side effects, however, the wrong genre or provocation of a negative memory could make the intervention ineffective. Portable devices could be beneficial for hospital patients

2. Implementation of Personalised Music Playlist - The dataset indicated implementation can be relatively simple if the person has had a prior interest or engagement in music. The literature outlined developing the right music playlist was key to its success, involving staff, relatives, carers and friends, particularly if the person is unable to communicate their preferences. There was evidence that ‘Playlist for Life’ offered training for people to become music detectives to produce personalised playlists

3. Impact of a Personalised Playlist on Staff, Carers and Families - Individualised music programmes can result in fewer episodes of very close supervision. One-to-one care is very intensive and is dependent upon having available staff. It can foster better relationships when delivering personal care and medication administration. There was no evidence of national guidelines for staff to follow in the selected data. Best practice would benefit from a guideline

4. Implications of a Personalised Playlist for Families and Carers - The evidence reports positive results in developing closer relationships between the person and their carers/families. It has shown extraordinary results with aphasic people who have lost verbal communication, being able to sing to familiar music. A headphone splitter has enable people to listen to music together, without disturbing others. All staff would need to be fully onboard with the benefits of this intervention and for it to be incorporated into care planning

5. Costing/Funding of a Personalised Music Playlist - The review indicates that equipment for implementing a personalised music playlist can be inexpensive. Lack of action to an agitated person would attract a cost, in terms of staffing and effect/side effect of pharmacological therapies

6. Personalised Music Playlists – an unsuitable intervention? - A person’s prior appreciation of music could impact its effectiveness. Other non-pharmacological interventions such as social gatherings, reminiscence therapies and family photographs may have better results in some instances. Music could increase distress and agitation if it provoked a traumatic memory, or the timing or length of the intervention was insufficient for the person’s needs. Hearing ability excluded persons from trials if impairment were a significant factor. However, ongoing hearing aid technology means a greater proportion of people are benefitting from music.

References:

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2021). *The Code*. Available at <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/>
Royal College of Nursing (2021). *Understanding Dementia*. Available at: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/dementia/understanding-dementia>
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Contact:

Helen Patricia Brown, Registered Nurse, NHS Tayside – helen.brown5@nhs.scot

This poster has been produced from the data collated from a Scoping Review as part of an MSc Older Adult Nursing dissertation. I am happy to share any information from the dissertation upon request.