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Presentation Title: Music therapy and autism: A research agenda

Abstract:

The idea that people with autism spectrum disorder may be reached through music has been around since Kanner published the first case description of an autistic boy in 1943, and music therapists have worked in the area for nearly as long. The amount and quality of clinical research on music therapy and autism has increased steeply over the last years. In this talk I will give an overview of current research knowledge, including but not limited to the first international multicentre randomised trial of improvisational music therapy (the TIME-A project) and several of its spin-off projects. While the results are mixed concerning the effectiveness of current approaches, they provide an excellent starting point for improving music therapy and continuing work to help understand what changes music therapy can bring about and how. I will present hypotheses and suggestions for research. Changing views of autism as a disorder or a personality trait will also be considered, as they may have implications for how music therapists think about their work.