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Presentation Title: When and why is a qualified music therapist needed for people with dementia for research, education and clinical practice?

Abstract:

The unique specific interventions of a music therapist in the field of dementia from a clinical education and research perspective will be discussed. This is a crucial topic: in 2017 approximately 55.4 million people were reported to be living with dementia worldwide. This is estimated to increase to 75.6 million in 2030, and 135.5 million in 2050. This results in an increased demand for long-term care in which effective management of symptoms is a major issue.

The music therapist's unique role in dementia care is where specific needs for people with dementia including their carers, cannot be met by others. For example behavioural and psychological disturbance in advance stages of dementia when cognitive function deteriorates and confusion is prevalent. Non-verbal communication through musical interaction is crucial at this stage, using improvised music where the music therapist supports validates, recognizes and musically develops the person's musical expression with them. Interventions for research, clinical practice and education will be discussed including musical examples which illustrate the unique role for music therapy to change behaviour and improve quality of life.