From Research to Practice: Music Therapy in Geriatric Care

A new practical guide by Alexander Wormit, Thomas Hillecke, Dorothée von Moreau and Carsten Diener provides insight into music therapy in the field of geriatrics. Published by Ernst Reinhardt Publishing House, the book is aimed at geriatrics professionals and relatives of patients.

Music keeps you young: It gets people moving physically and moves them emotionally. The practical guide Music Therapy in Geriatric Care derives from the ‘Music Therapy 360°’ project of the SRH University Heidelberg, which was funded from 2015 to 2018 by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). In the final survey, patients, family members and healthcare workers assessed the effectiveness of music therapy as being very high. Moreover, healthcare workers spoke of greater job satisfaction and had a reduced risk of burnout after the project. The newly published book with a listing of music therapy interventions is another result of this project. This practical guide is a science-based but nevertheless practically oriented aid for anyone involved in caring for the elderly.

“Quality of life in old age is one of the most pressing challenges in our aging societies,” says Prof. Dr. Alexander F. Wormit, editor of the practical guide and professor at SRH University Heidelberg – the only university in Germany to offer an undergraduate degree in music therapy. People with intellectual or language limitations, with neurological impairments, with age-related limitations such as dementia or with disabilities, but also victims of trauma – all these often find in music a means to help them cope with their situation. “But music does not become music therapy until it has a connection to a diagnosis, enables new insights, or reveals ways to alleviate, overcome or avoid suffering”, says Prof. Dr. Lutz Neugebauer, Chairman of the DMtG, the German music therapy society, in his foreword to the practical guide.

The book describes the effects of music and music therapy on older people, as well as the skills and experience that are useful for music-based work with this population. The listing of interventions can be translated into practice one to one. Quantitative as well as qualitative empirical research results of the Music Therapy 360° project are incorporated in the work. The book is aimed at all who interact in geriatric facilities – patients, relatives, caregivers and other professionals in the medical and psychosocial fields.

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wissenschaftliche Ansprechpartner:
Prof. Dr. Alexander Wormit
SRH University Heidelberg
alexander.wormit@srh.de
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