Model of learning for practitioners in dementia care with music therapy as the joint focal point
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Model of learning for practitioners in dementia care with music therapy as the joint focal point
- With focus on enhancing quality of life and wellbeing for persons with dementia

Aim of the research project
The project is a PhD research in progress, which aims to develop a model of learning for practitioners in dementia care, which can help increase quality of life and wellbeing for persons with dementia, through further development of therapeutic communicative and caring practices.

The research questions in the project
Through development of a cross-disciplinary cooperation between the music therapist and the care providers in connection with a course of music therapy, will following areas be elucidated:
- How can the musical and interpersonal competencies of the individual care provider be developed with the purpose to affect the relational meeting with persons suffering from dementia, in a way that the care provider is able to develop and transfer new knowledge and acquired skills to the daily nursing and care through the application of tangible tools from the musical activities?
- What impact does the emphasis on development of the care provider’s musical and interpersonal competencies have on quality of life and well-being among persons suffering from dementia?

Research methods and approach
The emphasis of the project is the relational meeting between the person suffering from dementia and the care provider in which music therapy is the joint focal point of construction and development of the relation. To make the relational meeting the object of this project is founded on the basic assumption that it is the professional care provider who has the responsibility for the quality of the relationship to the person suffering from dementia. Methodically the project is organized as a case study of a music therapy course in which includes process data, outcome data and follow-up data that assess the effect of the course in connection with the effect of the learning process of the practitioners.

Participants in the project
- Four persons suffering from dementia living in a care facility, with 16 residents in total.
- Four persons providing care for the persons with dementia in the care facility, with a total of 25 care providers employed.

Results
Preliminary results indicate that the care providers are able to develop and transfer new knowledge and acquired skills to the daily nursing and care through the application of tangible tools from the musical activities, which has an effect on quality of life and well-being for persons suffering from dementia.

The characteristics of the learning model as a whole
- The learning process has music therapy as the joint focal point.

- The four participating care providers have received special introduction and education - among others from the project’s theoretical frame of reference - for example Tom Kitwoods person-centered care, Daniel Stern’s theory of sense of self, forms of vitality, the present moment, Barry Reisberg’s research on retrogenesis and the recent research on mirror neurons.

- The pedagogical approach and methodology are planned according to the Dementia Care Mapping method, giving feedback and collaboration with care providers, based on Tom Kitwoods theory and values of a person-centered approach.

- The care providers receive feedback based on the Dementia Care Method and the video recordings of the music therapy sessions. During the feedback session is focused on giving the care providers tools, which can be used actively in their interactions with persons with dementia in different situations of relationships. The theoretical frame of reference for the project is also used. Music therapist helps with music therapy knowledge and perspectives during the sessions.

- Learning is based on the care providers practice. The learning process has moved into the care providers lives in the care environment in the dementia cohabitation unit.

- The learning situations that arise in the “meeting” between the person with dementia and the care providers is the common starting point - both in music therapy course and in everyday life.

- Researcher is responsible for the feedback process in relation to the care providers.

- During the feedback session the researcher and the care provider’s co-operates in setting out and carrying out action plans. The action plans focus on how the new knowledge, the new skills can be implemented in the specific care for the four participating persons with dementia, all the residents in the dementia cohabitation unit and in relation to all the staff care providers in the dementia cohabitation unit. The action plans also focus on the complexity and the context in which the intervention to the person with dementia takes place and on the learning aspects related to the interaction between care provider and the persons with dementia.

- The four participating care providers in the music therapy course are ambassadors, which implies that they have a responsibility to engage their colleagues in the new knowledge and the new skills so that it becomes widespread and applied generally to all residents in the dementia cohabitation unit.

- There are five scheduled follow-up meetings in 2012, where the care providers together with researcher will work on further development of the initiated action plans.

Description of “the symbolism” in the poster
A flower that symbolizes the learning model, where the flower’s petals illustrates the various elements in the learning model. Flowers leaves illustrates what is expected to be achieved through learning model - i.e. development of the care providers musical and interpersonal skills as well as implementation and transforming the new knowledge and new skills to the daily care. The small new plants illustrate the results achieved - i.e. examples of how new knowledge is transformed into practice. Earth and grass illustrates the values, culture and theoretical frame of reference - i.e. the common foundation that gives the flower and the new plant nutrition and the opportunity to grow larger. The black clouds are negative situations or challenges. The bright clouds illustrate the environmental factors that promote flower growth. And finally there is the sun, illustrating the development of dementia care through research.

References - theoretical frame of reference

Further information about the project
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