

# Music and movement for people with Parkinson's disease and their carers

## A Dalcroze Eurhythmics pilot study within a hospice environment

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There is a growing call for embodied, non-invasive approaches to rehabilitation which can improve social relationships as well as psychological and physical wellbeing. This call is supported by an emerging evidence base demonstrating the impact of psychosocial approaches, including music and movement, already found to be beneficial to those with neurological and other disorders.

### The pilot study

This practice-led study aimed to explore the experience and potential impact of a pilot music and movement project for people with Parkinson's disease (PD) and their carers. Over two months, six weekly sessions were offered as part of the expanding Wellbeing Programme at St Columba's Hospice Care, Edinburgh. Eight people with Parkinson's disease and five carers participated, and none of them were referred for palliative care.

The study followed a specific music and movement approach; **Dalcroze Eurhythmics**. Data collection involved baseline participant information, weekly ethnographic participant observation, as well as a participant focus group and an interview with the facilitator at the end of the project.

### Preliminary findings

The findings highlight the perceived impact of music and movement on people's sense of psychosocial and physical wellbeing in relation to four emerging thematic areas (Fig. 1). The embodied musical experiences in the group offered a safe and creative environment where participants could re-focus on their movement in a relational way. This included their movement in relation to the music, in relation to others in the group and in relation to the self. The sense of joy and playfulness fed into people's sense of confidence and nurtured their relationships with their carers too.

### Next steps

These preliminary findings offer an insight into the impact of music and movement for people with Parkinson's disease and their carers. The study adds to an emerging evidence base demonstrating the impact of Dalcroze Eurhythmics to older people and those with neurological disorders, with some studies focusing on people's dynamic agility (Adamczyk et al., 2020) and postural stability (Adamczyk et al., 2022).

The findings also support a wider growing call for embodied, creative approaches to rehabilitation which can improve anxiety and social relationships. To this end, the role of music-based rehabilitation has been particularly highlighted in line with embodied cognitive science (Schiavio & Altenmüller, 2015).

We argue that Hospices can play a crucial role in the provision of such music and movement programmes as part of an expanded wellbeing and health promotion agenda. Such broader conception of palliative care can support people with Parkinson's disease and their families by addressing non-motor symptoms such as pain, depression and fatigue (Shulman et al., 2002).

High rates of care home placement, hospitalisation in the last year of life and in-hospital deaths (Snell et al., 2009) as well as PD caregivers sense of being under-prepared for their role and high levels of burden, high incidence of depression and increased mortality (Goy et al. 2008; Martinez-Martin et al., 2008) are all key issues requiring further attention from hospice providers. To this end, the provision of music and movement programmes can be an important addition to existing psychosocial provisions within Hospices.

### References

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**Dalcroze Eurhythmics** is a unique approach promoting sensorimotor integration through musical experience. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), the founder of this approach, wrote:

*"Musical consciousness is the result of physical experience"*

As an embodied, holistic approach, Dalcroze Eurhythmics considers psychosocial aspects of wellbeing, alongside physical functions of balance and gait as well as executive functions and alertness and concentration (Greenhead & Habron, 2015; Schlögl & Kressig, 2012; Trombetti et al., 2011).

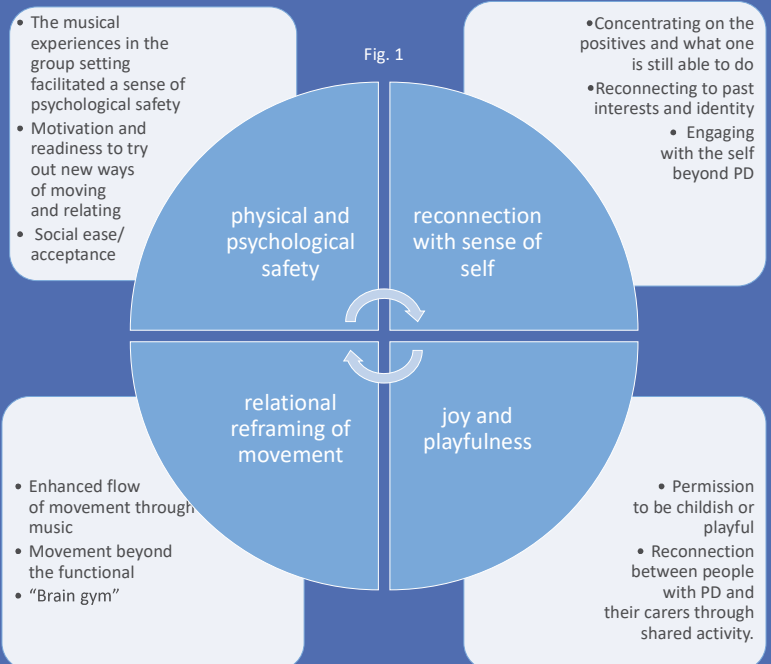
Today, Dalcroze Eurhythmics has applications within diverse pedagogy, therapy and the performing arts contexts. However, applications to adult neurological rehabilitation and hospice care are relatively sparse to date.



It was probably a release for me to be able to be free as it were, but still in a safe environment and be around people and I was able to let off steam a little bit.

The bouncing balls...things that sounded simple in concept with which actually proved to be really quite difficult in the execution. It's something that you probably wouldn't do in your own house. Music made the movement flow better.

With Parkinson's, your feet to get stuck on the floor a bit they are frozen. [...] Yes, I think the idea of moving or marching to music is definitely helpful [...] It's the rhythm yeah. It's establishing the rhythm I think and getting yourself into a rhythm to walk or do anything actually.



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