

Music Helps Dementia Patients Engage

Sometimes hearing a special song instantly improves our mood and kindles happy memories. Now there may be scientific proof that music helps people suffering from dementia.

There's just something about music that seems to bring nursing home patients with dementia out of their shells.

For example, when 96-year-old Mike Knutson hears that big band sound, he taps his toes, claps his hands and smiles, according to his daughter, Barb Knutson.

"The music really does something to wake him up and help him to be more engaged with what is going on around him," she said.

Knutson is taking part in a study of 200 nursing homes. The results are being analyzed by University of Wisconsin researchers.

"This is a study to look at the effects of music listening on a number of quality of life indicators for the people with the dementia in nursing homes," Jung Kwak, a professor working on the study, explained.

She's talking about mood and memory, both immediately and long term. The results of the study could mean music therapy will be added to traditional dementia treatments and could even take the place of some medications.

But not just any music will do. The patient needs to listen to songs he or she loves.

In the study, each person has a designated iPod loaded with their own unique playlist. Dana Kugler, a therapist who has observed the patients participating in the study, has noticed

a difference.

"We've seen members who don't talk very much start to sing," she said.

Because of the study, Knutson said now she and her siblings always make music a part of the time they spend with their father.

"We feel as though we have been blessed with this whole new experience with dad," she said. "We are able to connect in a completely different way, in a very genuine way."

For the original article, visit .