

Foreword

It is such a privilege to be invited to write the foreword of this important book. Having played an integral role in bringing the scholars of these two countries together, I have observed the passion and joy, particularly from our early career researchers, in sharing their experiences and transforming these into rich, informative, and engaging chapters, with the red thread of music and dementia care woven throughout the book.

In the context of music therapy practice in dementia care, music and music therapy have long been recognised as powerful tools to stimulate autobiographical recall, connect those who are isolated, and lift mood. This book brings together senior and junior scholars from two countries – Australia and Germany – to examine cross-cultural differences in music therapy approaches that expand and deepen knowledge while informing future practice. Emerging from a six-year collaboration between universities in Germany and Australia, this work showcases a series of research projects, interventions, and studies that have collectively shaped new approaches to music-based care. Two major initiatives, MWD-Song and MUSE-CARE, have provided the foundation for innovative models of care that are explored in depth. In a novel way, scholars from Germany and Australia have been paired by theme, enabling focused dialogue, critical debate, and exploration of the ways music and music therapy are understood and practiced in their respective countries. This approach highlights the opportunities and potential that international collaboration can bring to advancing knowledge and practice.

One of the key themes of this book is the application of music-based strategies in home-based dementia care – something dear to my heart and an area of significant importance as the world prepares for the expected exponential increase in the number of people living longer (McMahon & Petrowitz). While several articles have already been published about the HOMESIDE study, the work described here provides a deep dive into some of the challenges posed by a remote and digitally delivered music training program. Implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, this chapter reveals how cultural contexts influenced the delivery and acceptance of these interventions. As highlighted in the book, remote and digital interventions also created new opportunities for reaching individuals who might not otherwise have had access to music therapy services, paving a pathway for new initiatives, such as MATCH (Music Attuned Technology for Caregiving in Healthcare) (Vidas et al., 2024).

A further significant contribution of this book is its focus on the training of formal caregivers in music-based interventions. By examining approaches developed in Germany and South Africa, the chapter by Thurn and Stuart-Röhm highlights strategies aimed at empowering caregivers, enhancing their self-efficacy, and im-

proving the overall quality of care. The German MusicKit model integrates musical elements into daily routines, while the South African approach (Patient-Centred Caregiver Singing) leverages creative music therapy concepts to engage caregivers and people living with dementia. These cross-cultural perspectives offer valuable insights into how music can be embedded into caregiving practices worldwide. With a focus on empowering caregivers in the Global South – where access to music therapy is almost non-existent – applying such approaches will likely expand the reach of music therapy approaches.

The chapter by Thompson and Eickholt compares two approaches – songwriting and choir singing – and highlights shared mechanisms and outcomes of people living with dementia, their family caregiver, and people living with late life depression despite different programme aims and contexts.

Perhaps most unique to this text is the chapter on the economics of music therapy in dementia care, with a comparative analysis of the cost-effectiveness of music therapy interventions in Germany and Australia. This chapter highlights the challenges in quantifying the benefits of these approaches, particularly for people living with dementia. Campbell, Wosch, and Warnke propose pathways for refining economic evaluations, including clearer inclusion criteria and improved outcome measures. In an era where the need is great, but funds are limited, it is more important than ever to evaluate cost-effectiveness to strengthen the case for broader adoption of music therapy in dementia care contexts.

Several key themes are evident throughout the book. First and foremost, the importance of person-centred care is highlighted, ensuring that music interventions align with a person's unique and changing needs and preferences. The book chapters highlight the capacity for music to forge meaningful connections, especially between people with dementia and their family caregivers and also professional staff providing dementia care. Importantly, the book highlights the need to use research methods that are rigorous in order to substantiate the effectiveness of music therapy and ensure uptake and adoption of evidence-based music strategies for care. The book also brings into focus the value of international collaboration in advancing research and practice in music-based dementia care. The MUSE-CARE model of collaboration is an excellent example of how a long and systematic partnership can shed light on subtle cross-cultural differences.

The book concludes with a forward-looking perspective on the future of music-based interventions in dementia care. There is a call to action – for more interdisciplinary collaboration, the use of innovative research methodologies, and a greater focus on communicating findings to policymakers and the public. The authors emphasise the need for holistic evaluation models that consider not only symptom reduction but also broader measures of wellbeing, social connection, and overall quality of life for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

Led by experienced researchers – Professor Thomas Wosch, Associate Professor Jeanette Tamplin and Assistant Professor Elsa Campbell – this book serves as

a valuable resource for researchers, clinicians, and policymakers dedicated to enhancing dementia care. It reinforces the idea that music is a fundamental element in the pursuit of dignity, connection, and wellbeing for people living with dementia. I congratulate all the authors for bringing this important work to the dementia care audience.

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