

OPUS Music presentation notes Creative Health 29.6.18

I'd like to introduce you to the eminent neuroscientist and psychobiologist Jaak Panksepp, known sometimes as the 'rat tickler' due to his studies on the emotional systems of animals, in the pursuit of a greater understanding of human emotional systems. Jaak is the one on the left! His studies led him to the discovery of seven, primal emotional command systems.

Panksepp always presents these systems to us in CAPITALS as they are deeply rooted in the brain, and fundamental to mammalian survival. He discovered that some of our primal emotional systems cannot be stimulated in parallel with each other.

The SEEKING system, which 'feels' like curiosity, and a general enthusiasm for life, biologically and chemically suppresses the RAGE and FEAR systems.

Similarly, the PLAY system cannot exist in the same space and time as the PANIC system. Panksepp explains that too much psychological pain, the gateway to depression, can be countered by the joyous feelings, and the resulting molecular changes stimulated by PLAY.

So what does this mean for Arts, and particularly in our case Music in Health?

Well, the wonderful thing about The Arts, is that it deals with the human soul. It taps deeply into our brains, and our hearts, and affects us all in individual and unique ways. As highly trained Artists, and critically as highly trained and experienced Arts in Health Practitioners, it allows us the opportunity to address the cultural human being we are presented with, to support and enhance their wellness, rather than solely diminish their injury or illness.

Through PLAYful, musical interactions, we can inhibit both psychological and physical pain – an effect which is both in the moment, and also left behind long after the musician has gone. Here we can see the joyousness of shared music-making, of an increase in child's agency, of mutual respect between patient and practitioner, of each other's contribution to the PLAYful process of music-making.

Through SEEKING, curiosity and creativity, we can reduce fear and anxiety, a major cause of long-term distress for hospitalised children and young people. Studies show that lack of control and autonomy also leads to such distress. The skill, flexibility and artistry of the musician in healthcare, provides autonomy for the young person, to make decisions about music-making, and to be potentially more empowered on their healthcare journey, through the act of making music itself.

Through a generous and genuine opening of hearts, a connection of real CARE is made between musician and patient in which both can thrive musically, physically and psychologically. Music provides an excuse to take time together, to connect, without the necessity for verbal, or other

recognised forms of communication. This very real, personal and honest connection, made without prejudice or agenda, can lead to some very powerful and moving musical moments for patients, for visitors, for staff and for musicians themselves. In my opinion, this is ART at its very best.

The alteration of a necessarily clinical space around a premature baby in a neonatal intensive care unit, to a cultural one where a parent is enabled to sing to their baby, to connect emotionally and respond to each other without the fear or anxiety of the space around them, can only be positive...

These are the kind of impacts we experience in our daily practice of Music in Healthcare.

Outside of our regular Music in Healthcare practice taking place in children's hospitals, CAMHS and older people's settings, OPUS has taken a significant role in the advocacy and workforce development of this practice within the UK.

OPUS musicians have a model of practice, based upon European collaboration and skill sharing led by the fantastique Musique et Sante, which you may have guessed is based in France. We have trained through this European Collaboration as Musicians in Healthcare and as Trainers of Musicians in Healthcare, and have delivered training over the past 7 years, to well over 100 professional musicians. Coupled with paid Apprenticeship programmes, this has led to the development of new Music in Healthcare organisations, and high quality practices, taking place across the UK and beyond, in settings including Great Ormond Street and Alder Hey Children's Hospitals to name just two.

We have delivered training for musicians in Australia, spreading practice into rural regions of New South Wales, and have recently agreed a partnership with the Canadian organisation Room 217 to co-deliver training for healthcare staff wishing to use music within older people's care settings.

Through symposia and conferences, we have established networks of practice, leading to the establishment of the National Alliance of Musicians in Healthcare which recently held its second annual conference at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool. As a networked group of dedicated and passionate stakeholders, the National Alliance of Musicians in Healthcare provided a shared response to the inquiry and the resulting report, which receives its East Midlands launch here today.

OPUS is rightly proud of its practice and the role it has played to date within sector and workforce development. We heartily welcome the recommendations outlined in the report, and look forward to playing a role in helping to deliver these. An investment in the Arts, and particularly in skilled Arts and Health practice, is an investment in the health and wellbeing of our nation.

I would like to finish with a quote from Louise Shepherd, the Chief Executive of Alder Hey Children's Hospital on welcoming the conference to Liverpool. She said this of the Music in Healthcare workforce...

'It's astonishing how much you achieve with so little financial resource'.

It's true that much is achieved with relatively little financial resource, and there is a need to address this in order to sustain and continue the development of high-quality practice. However, trained and experienced Music in Health practitioners bring a huge resource of talent, flexibility and cultural humility, enhancing the humanity of healthcare, the power of which must not be underestimated.