



Marie's Music Matters: Delirium, Dementia & Depression

By: Rebecca de Witte, RN, RNAO Long-Term Care Best Practice Coordinator

Faith Manor, Holland Christian Homes, Brampton

As the elevator doors open, a woman in a formal brown blazer greets me, her hair neatly pinned back. Marie is 93 years of age. She has a vibrant bounce in her step and a sparkle in her eyes as she exits the elevator. Playing the piano has been Marie's passion for over 58 years. Today, she is excited to show me what her piano playing does for the residents living with dementia, on Unit 2.

The sound of various alarms and call bells can be heard all around this brightly lit unit. Several of the dedicated staff are busy discussing medication orders and tasks that need to be completed prior to the start of a meeting. The phone is ringing and several residents are calling out all at once.

Marie leads me to a recreational room, away from the hustle and bustle of daily life on Unit 2. Residents are seated in wheelchairs, many with their heads bent downward. Marie sits before the piano, her shoulders tall, and her fingers ready to play.

A burst of music fills the room as her fingers move swiftly across the piano keys. Heads slowly raise, eyes open and smiles light up the residents' faces. The activation staff member is also smiling. The room feels like the sun has just come out.

Marie plays one song into the next, all from memory. She knows what awakens the residents' minds; she has been doing this for years. Marie started playing the piano for the residents when her husband was admitted many years ago. Coming from a musical family, she understands the science behind happiness. "Look at them smiling," she says. Everyone is connecting to the music.

There is a growing body of evidence about the positive effects of music on those living with dementia. Using a range of strategies that optimize the quality of life for these residents is a best practice recommendation. Marie's music is definitely having a positive impact. She has witnessed the effects of music first hand, every Friday, on Unit 2. Residents who have not spoken for a long time are smiling and humming to the music. Others are even singing!

As I thank Marie for allowing me to witness her musical magic that brings happiness to the residents at Holland Christian Homes, she replies, "I like to give them their smiles back!"

-About Faith Manor, Holland Christian Homes –

Faith Manor is a 120-bed long-term care home in the Central West region of Ontario. As part of Holland Christian Homes, the home serves mainly the Christian community and those primarily of Dutch-Canadian heritage.



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