

An AIRS Symposium entitled: “Singing Across the Lifespan: *Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing - A Lifespan Megaproject*” organized by Laurel Young, Leader of the AIRS Sub-Theme 3.3 Singing and Health) will be presented at the 3rd meeting of the International Association of Music and Medicine (IAMM) 3:30 to 5:00 pm, Wednesday, June 25th, Walter Hall, University of Toronto Faculty of Music. The following 8 papers will be presented.

Members of AIRS will provide an overview on the project and then present briefly on research studies relevant to music and medicine that have been supported by AIRS. Time will also be left for questions and discussion. Please find below abstracts of the papers that will be presented.

Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing: A Lifespan Megaproject
Annabel J. Cohen, PhD

The first paper provides an overview of the AIRS project, its theoretical and applied goals. An example is given of a multinational study on singing development across the lifespan, using the AIRS Test Battery of Singing Skills, which can ultimately contribute to the foundation for understanding the impact of singing on well-being.

Exploring the Outcomes of Singing and Diaphragmatic Breathing in Persons with Asthma
Carina Daugherty, M.A.; Mary Gick, Ph.D.

Sixty people with asthma partook in four weekly singing (n = 22), breathing (n = 20) and singing and breathing (n = 18) sessions. Peak Expiratory Flow, breathlessness, distress, and aspects of quality of life improved significantly in all groups. Participants practiced singing more than breathing, and enjoyed practicing more when singing was combined with breathing.

“Glee” 3 Phase Research Study on Singing for Health and Wellness
Amy Clements-Cortes, PhD, MTA, MT-BC, FAMI

This presentation overviews three phases of the “Glee” studies implemented at Baycrest Centre in Toronto, Ontario with cognitively impaired older adults attending day care facilities and/or residing in a nursing home. Research questions, method, and results will be shared to illuminate the health benefits of singing implemented by a music therapy conductor.

The Use of Singing to Promote Health & Well Being for Adults with High Functioning Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome
Fellow, Association for Music & Imagery
Laurel Young, PhD, MTA

Although previous research indicates that singing has positive health outcomes for the general population, the relevance of these findings for many special needs populations has not been explored. This research investigated the impact of participation in a singing group on the health/well being of adults who have high functioning Autism/Asperger’s Syndrome. A variety of outcomes will be discussed.

Singing as a Means for Social Inclusion: Two Case Studies with Excluded Populations, Youth with Exceptionalities and Young Mothers

Dr. Jennifer J. Nicol, PhD, MTA, RDPsych; Jennifer McAllister MM

Social inclusion is an identified key social determinant of health, and increasing evidence suggests that singing can redress the social exclusion experienced by stigmatized groups such as young mothers and individuals with disabilities. Findings from two case studies coupled with a growing extant literature are presented in support of this claim.

Preliminary Report on a Novel Singing Therapy to Support Emotional Communication in Parkinson's

Steven Livingstone, PhD; Lucille McGarry; Frank Russo, PhD

Patients with Parkinson's disease exhibit deficits in the production and recognition of emotional facial expressions and tone of voice, decreasing quality of life. We outline a 13-week singing therapy that uses facial and vocal mimicry to rehabilitate expressive deficits. We will report physiological, acoustic, and behavioral outcomes for 36 patients.

Preliminary Report on a Novel Singing Therapy to Support Emotional Communication in Autism

Lucille McGarry; Frank Russo, PhD

Children with autism exhibit deficient facial mimicry during social interactions, which is connected to difficulties perceiving emotion. We have created a video game in which children explicitly act out emotions presented through song and speech, in order to train motor mimicry. Preliminary data suggests that emotional accuracy increases following training.

Examining the Health Effects of Singing on Persons with Dementia and their Caregivers in an Intergenerational Choral Program

Carol Beynon, PhD; Jennifer Hutchison

This study involved an Intergenerational Choir combining approximately 20 secondary students (age 14-18) with 25 seniors with Alzheimer's and their caregivers throughout 7 one-hour singing sessions and culminating in a concert performance. Through observation and interview protocol, results indicated that singing programs grounded in goals of musical, educational, and social development produced elevated levels of mental and physical engagement corresponding to elevated reports of mental and physical relief and well-being.