

## Music Therapy Charity Large Research Grant Report Development and evaluation of the CHORD (CHOrus Research in Dementia) manual

### SUMMARY

The CHORD (CHOrus Research in Dementia) manual for singing group facilitators was developed and evaluated as a music therapy skill-sharing project. We followed the MRC Complex Intervention Guidance framework: 1) Development, 2) Piloting, 3) Evaluation and 4) Implementation. The development phase included literature reviews, experts consultations and consensus meetings to identify key clinical and musical components that can be shared with both therapists and non-therapists who are running singing groups for people with dementia. We developed a draft CHORD manual, which was piloted for 10 weeks in Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. Feedback from the group facilitator and group members with dementia was incorporated into refining the manual. Following the final consensus meeting, the CHORD manual final version from Stage 1 was produced. Stage 2 of the study involved a PhD researcher in University of Nottingham conducting further evaluation of the manual. A community musician without therapy training used the CHORD manual to run a local community-based singing group for people with dementia or memory problems and their carers. The evaluation process included completion of the manual adherence forms and obtaining feedback from the facilitator and group members. Analysis of the data and evaluation of the singing group is still on-going as part of the doctoral study, but specific feedback related to refining the manual was used to finalise the CHORD manual. Further experts consultations were conducted. The CHORD manual final version was printed in November 2018 and is made available to the general public. Provision of music therapy by qualified therapists is necessary to meet complex needs of clients. However, there is an increasing need for music therapy skill-sharing in dementia care and the CHORD manual can contribute towards growing music therapy skill-sharing resources.

### INTRODUCTION

With nearly 50 million people living with dementia, dementia is a global challenge (Alzheimer's Disease International, 2018) and a public health priority (WHO, 2012). Currently there is no drug or other therapy to cure dementia. In order to maintain the sense of self, managing and living well with dementia is extremely important (Wolverson, Clarke, & Moniz-Cook, 2016). Timely psychosocial interventions are essential, not just as nonpharmacological treatments to manage dementia symptoms, but also to support the unique psychological and social needs of the person (McDermott et al., 2018; Moniz-Cook et al., 2008).

Active music-making and choir singing have been acknowledged to be beneficial for subjective wellbeing (Clift et al., 2010; Creech et al., 2013). Qualitative studies on group singing (e.g. Unadkat et al., 2017; Davidson & Fedele, 2011) have shown that group participants benefit from having social opportunities and musical interactions often have a positive impact on the relationships between people with dementia and their families. However, running singing groups does not require formal training, and the majority of singing groups rely on musical and interpersonal skills of individual facilitators. Although the increasing popularity of group singing has led to many positive outcomes, it also highlights the need to ensure safe, informed use of music with people with dementia. "Therapeutic" singing can be non-therapeutic if the facilitators do not pay sufficient attention to the unique needs of individual participants or their mood on the day.

Music therapists have long been skill-sharing music therapeutic skills with families, staff and carers. It is part of music therapists' everyday practice to share their knowledge and insights of clients with staff and/or teach staff/families how they may be able to use music during their everyday activity. As the number of people living with dementia grows, it is likely that the roles of music therapists working with this population will have to expand in order to meet their unique clinical and societal needs. In addition to informal or practical skill-sharing during clinical work, there was a need for "systematic" music therapy skill-sharing. We thought the development and evaluation of a manual is a good way to ensure transparency and replicability of therapeutic interventions.

We applied for the Music Therapy Charity large project grant in 2015. We were awarded the grant for the manual development phase (Year 1): on the condition that we self-funded the manual evaluation phase (Year 2 onwards). We secured the PhD studentship from the TAnDem (The Arts and Dementia) Doctoral Centre (funded by Alzheimer's Society, hosted by Universities of Nottingham and Worcester) (<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/tandem-phd-studentship.html>) so that we could appoint a PhD student to evaluate the CHORD manual.

## **METHODS**

### **Phase 1. CHORD manual development and preliminary evaluation (2015-2016): funded by the Music Therapy Charity**

The development of the CHORD manual followed the MRC Complex Intervention Guidance:

1) Development, 2) Piloting, 3) Evaluation and 4) Implementation.

- 1) **Development.** The first phase of the study included literature reviews, experts consultations, and consensus meetings. Six music therapists specialising in group singing with people with dementia and one volunteer manager from mindsong ([www.mindsong.org.uk](http://www.mindsong.org.uk)) contributed to the initial development. After drafting the outline of the manual, OM organised two consensus meetings to achieve agreement on the key clinical and musical components that are 'transferrable' to non-music therapists (singing group facilitators without therapist training). OM revised the outline, produced a draft manual and refined the manual in consultation with the music therapists.
- 2) **Piloting.** The manual was piloted for 10 weeks by the "CHORD singing group" comprising of the Memory Service users in London (Oct-Dec 2016). A NHS ethics approval (16/WA/0104) was obtained for this study (March 2016). The group facilitator's (music therapist) time was funded by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust.
- 3) **Evaluation.** Feedback from group members and facilitator was incorporated to revise the draft manual. OM held another consensus meeting and consulted the music therapists to finalise the manual.
- 4) **Implementation.** Hard copies of revised manual copies were produced and were made available for Stage 2. The CHORD manual was presented at two international conference presentations: the 26<sup>th</sup> Alzheimer Europe Conference, Copenhagen (2016) and the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Music Therapy, Japan (2017). Both conference costs were covered by Aalborg University/Velux Foundation as part of OM's postdoctoral work.

### **CHORD manual structure**

The CHORD manual comprises of the four main sections:

1. "Starting a singing group" offers practical advice to help a facilitator set up a new group.
2. "Skills and Techniques" is the main music therapy skill-sharing section. The key musical techniques (which are possible to communicate through a manual without face-to-face training), that will be helpful when working with people with dementia, are highlighted. The emphasis is on "how to be in the moment of a shared musical experience".
3. Mindsong, one of the CHORD collaborators, kindly shared their resources as "Some songs suggestions to get you started".
4. "Information about dementia" is included for singing group facilitators who may have no/limited experiences of working with people with dementia.

## **Phase 2. CHORD manual evaluation (2016-ongoing): funded by the TAnDem Doctoral Centre (BD) and Velux Foundation (OM)**

It is not the limit of this document to report the Phase 2 (an on-going study led by the PhD student), but the outline of the study process is summarised below.

- 1) Becky Dowson (BD) was appointed in 2016 to evaluate the CHORD manual as part of her doctoral study. Her doctoral study based in University of Nottingham is supervised by Prof Justine Schneider and OM (<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/tandem-meet-our-students.html>).
- 2) Although the original study plan was to conduct a pilot RCT to evaluate the manual, the decision was made to conduct this as a pre-post study due to restrictions of resources available for a doctoral project. "Blue Skies Singing Group" singing group leader – a community musician without formal training, with some experiences of working with people with dementia – was recruited.
- 3) Evaluation of the CHORD manual with the Blue Skies Singing Group was conducted in 2017. The evaluation process included the facilitator completing the manual adherence forms (11-item likert-style questionnaire) and obtaining feedback from the group members and the facilitator.
- 4) It will not be accurate to declare the success of the singing group was only due to the CHORD manual, but the group members and the facilitator were keen to continue with weekly sessions after the evaluation phase was completed. After 12 months, the group still continues to meet every week.
- 5) Feedback from BD and the group facilitator were incorporated to produce the CHORD manual final version. OM contacted the music therapists who participated in Phase 1 again to achieve consensus on the final version of the manual.
- 6) OM and BD presented the CHORD manual at the 28<sup>th</sup> Alzheimer Europe conference in Barcelona (OM funded by Prof Orrell, BD funded by the TAnDem training budget).
- 7) The CHORD manual was printed in November 2018. We are distributing copies of the manual to the key contributors and researchers who expressed their interest in using the manual for their studies. The CHORD manual is available to the general public (£7 to cover the printing cost plus postage and packing). We plan to advertise the manual widely in 2019. CNWL is organising the CHORD launch event (planned February 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

To our knowledge, the CHORD manual is the first singing manual developed following the rigorous MRC "development – piloting – evaluation – implementation" model. The strength of the manual is that the contents were developed from collective experts knowledge (seven music therapists, a volunteer manager and a community musician) and we used consensus methods at each stage to ensure trustworthiness and relevance. Although the limitation of implementing a manual without face-to-face training needs to be acknowledged, the use of manual allows the intervention to be replicable, which may be useful in future studies. Music therapy interventions by qualified therapists are still necessary to meet complex needs of clients. However, there is an increasing need for music therapy skill-sharing in dementia care (McDermott et al., 2018), and the CHORD manual can contribute towards growing music therapy skill-sharing resources.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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Stage 2 CHORD manual evaluation contributors: Becky Dowson, Prof Justine Schneider, Julie Barnes and the TAnDem Doctoral Training Centre.

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Respectfully submitted,

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## **APPENDIX 1. CHORD study outputs as of November 2018**

### ***CHORD manual***

Available from the CHORD study PI (Orie.McDermott@nottingham.ac.uk)

### ***International conference oral presentations***

McDermott, O. & Dowson, B. (2018). P5.4. The CHORD manual for singing group facilitators working with people with dementia. The 28<sup>th</sup> Alzheimer Europe Conference, Barcelona. Abstract available from: <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Conferences/Barcelona-2018/Detailed-programme-abstracts-and-presentations/P5.-Care-approaches-Art-and-dementia>

McDermott, O. & Ridder, H.M. (2017). CHORD: transferring music therapy skills to singing group facilitators without therapy training. 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Music Therapy, Tsukuba, Japan.

McDermott, O., Ridder, H.M. & Orrell, M. (2016). The development and preliminary evaluation of CHORD manual. The 26<sup>th</sup> Alzheimer Europe Conference, Copenhagen. Power point available from: <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=2ahUKEwiz-dyQuuXeAhUMJMAKHTReBzQQFjACegQIBhAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.alzheimer-europe.org%2Fcontent%2Fdownload%2F131644%2F820711%2Ffile%2FP13.5%2520McDERMOTT%2520Orie.pdf&usg=AOvVaw275nMW-Pu70pd61IVgkEwc>

### ***Conference poster presentation***

de Sousa, E., Dowson, B. & McDermott, O. (2018) Group singing for people with dementia: an observational study. Poster. Royal College of Psychiatrists International Congress, Birmingham.