



**GERIA**  
Oslo kommunes ressurscenter for demens/alderspsykiatri

## **GERIA- The City of Oslo Resource Center for Dementia and Psychiatric Care of the Elderly**

### **About GERIA**

GERIA is the City of Oslo resource center for dementia and psychiatric care of the elderly. GERIA's main task is to assist health personnel at nursing homes and in home based care who work with people with dementia and elderly with mental disorders and their families. GERIA's offer consists of dissemination of information (newsletters, subject books, web sites, project reports, etc.), competence development (courses, network, project work) and advice/guidance.

After ten years of operation GERIA has developed various skills upgrading series of courses that are held locally at nursing homes and in home based care or as central course offerings (designated with credits). GERIA has also developed its own course series in complementary therapies for people with dementia. Today GERIA offers its own educational program for employees in the use of individualized use of sensory garden, reminiscence and music as well as therapeutic hand massage. These four complementary therapies today constitute a module which is designated with study credits for the master degree at the Buskerud University College.

### **Music as complementary therapy and method of communication**

People with dementia often have reduced ability to express themselves through language. The need to express themselves however does not disappear if one suffers from dementia. When a verbal channel does not function as previously, music may be an open and accessible procedure for communication for the one who suffers from dementia. The prerequisite is that the music should be adjusted to the individual person's need or musical preference.

### **The Individualized music method**

The American nurse and researcher Linda Gerdner started the "Individualized Music" project in 2000. She had a group of people who suffered from dementia and had challenging behavior and wanted to find out if music could be utilized to reduce that

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behavior. Musical efforts were attempted and the group was divided into two. The first group was allowed to listen to music which their relatives said that they were fond of, and the other group was listening to classical “relaxation music”. Anxiety and aggressive behavior was significantly reduced. But it turned out that the individualized music was much more effective.

GERIA’s leader Solfrid Rosenvold Lyngroth has in collaboration with Dr. Audun Myskja further developed the Linda Gerdner method. This work started with GERIA’s “Individualized use of music in the care of elderly people – a project at three nursing homes in Oslo” (2001-2002). The first step in the method is to register the musical preferences, the second step is to initiate musical effort and the last step is to evaluate the effect of the effort. The goal of the Individualized music method is increased well-being for people suffering from dementia and elderly people with mental disorders.

GERIA and Audun Myskja have developed their own wellness questionnaire in order to measure the effect of the musical efforts. This work was followed by the project “When music creates contact –dealing with the development of the Individualized music method” (2006). The written reports on both the projects (Norwegian) can be purchased by contacting GERIA.

### **The Individualized Music Training Program**

In connection with the first music project GERIA developed a training program on the Individualized Music method for personnel at nursing homes and home based care without professional music background. In addition to learning the method step by step the participants are encouraged to use music as complementary therapy and way of communication as part of the daily work with people suffering from dementia. The training is followed up by offering guidance to the participants.

### **A musical network for employees in Oslo who work with people suffering from dementia**

After completing training of the Individualized Music method the participants are invited into GERIA’s musical network group. The network functions as a forum for professional exchange, gives inspiration to support work with Individualized Music and provides lectures on relevant subjects in this area. The participants in the network are both employees without professional background in music and experienced music professionals working at nursing homes in Oslo. The network meetings are approved as credits for improving career prospects by some trade unions.

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## **Network for professional music personnel**

The network group is a forum for musical employees in Oslo who work with people suffering from dementia and elderly people with mental illnesses. The group includes music therapists, musicians and cultural leaders. The Norwegian Academy of Music, the Center for Music and Health, is a collaborative partner.

The group works among other things to elucidate the music professional employees' role at nursing homes and observes how the individual has planned their work. The members are also exchanging ideas on work methods and provide collegial guidance when needed.

The group has developed a work description for professional music personnel at nursing homes. The professional music employee's role deals in addition to his/her own musical practise with contributing to increase the health care personnel's skills level. Here GERIA's training program has proved to be helpful. It provides encouragement and guidance for the health care personnel in selecting music based on the residents' musical taste, in planning a CD library and in ensuring that the use of individualized music is rooted in the nursing homes activities (Lyngroth, Kvamme, Skogen 2006).

## **Tools used in the Individualized Music method**

After GERIA's first musical project the participants emphasized the need for music from a variety of genres in order to simplify finding the individual's musical taste. In 2003 GERIA therefore developed and published a **musical-preference cd** with music from 11 various genres (cultural attaché Birgit Skogen, music therapist Tone Sæther Kvamme and executive director Solfrid Rosenvold Lyngroth).

Subsequently GERIA's musical network reported a need for a songbook with large print which also is prepared for people with dementia. A committee consisting of network members; occupational therapist assistant Beth Nordahl and nurse assistant Gunn Horne; and music therapist Burghard Wellmann and executive director Solfrid Rosenvold Lyngroth from GERIA, therefore started developing the songbook **Toner deg i mote-sanger i stor skrift**. It consists of a **book of songs** in large print and a **resource book** with melodies and guitar arrangement for all the songs as well as information regarding the composer, the script writer and/or the background of the song, a listing of guitar chords and a double CD with accompanying music to a selection of the songs. The songs have been divided into the same musical genre as GERIA's musical-preference CD.

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