

4th International Conference on

Vascular Dementia

June 30-July 02, 2016 Valencia, Spain

The influence of music during rehabilitation- a case story of anoxic brain damage

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Eight years ago a 53 years old man was rescued from a cardiac arrest that lasted 3/4 of an hour, an incident that subsequently led to a severe brain damage and the diagnosis of dementia. This man was not just anybody, he was my husband. In this sudden moment, I was thrown into a situation of participant observation, trained as I was in anthropology. In this paper, I present some reflections from a perspective of being a next of kin as well as social researcher. My phenomenological focus will concentrate on the amazing influence that music seems to have had on his recovery, especially the way it seems to have encouraged his emerging sense of self and identity. Even though he is suffering from severe cognitive problems with orientation in time, space and vision, he is physically on his feet, walking around in a rather stable manner. While it seems that music has been important for his condition from the start, the last five years he has attended therapeutical music lessons twice a week, singing songs accompanied by the teachers' guitar. Astonishingly he has been able to learn new melodies as well texts, and lately we have observed emotional responses to the music that he performs which has not been observed before.

Biography

Elisabeth L'orangeFürst has completed her PhD from The University of Oslo, Norway and Postdoctoral studies at The University of Uppsala, Sweden. Since 2001, she is Professor at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo. She has published more than 50 papers in reputed journals and anthologies as well as three books and one edited volume. She has also been the editor of a *Norwegian Journal in Social Sciences*.

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