



Music another weapon in palliative care arsenal

For music therapist Deborah Salmon, work on the palliative care ward at Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital comes down to just one thing: finding the person within the patient. "The hospital setting is usually so busy because of budget cuts, and with everyone rushing around the human, spiritual and emotional aspects of the person are often neglected," she says. "Music has such breadth and depth and can touch people on so



Deborah Salmon (playing flute), music therapist at the Royal Victoria Hospital, and Lillian Eyre, music therapist at the Montreal General, teamed up for a duet in the General's lobby during Music Therapy Week.

many levels simultaneously that it is an ideal tool to help people connect with what is important in their lives."

As patients and their families spend their last hours together, Salmon uses live and recorded music, environmental sounds, guided imagery and relaxation techniques to help patients cope with pain, nausea and anxiety. Patients can express their feelings by choosing favourite hymns or songs associated with special memories. Musicians from the community often come to play on the ward, and there are CD and tape players at every bedside.

Music therapy has been part of the Royal Vic's innovative palliative care program almost since its inception in 1975, and Salmon has been part of it for 12 years; her salary is supported by donations. Over those years the music-therapy field has grown, with more than 150 papers now published on music therapy within palliative care alone. Master's-level degrees in music therapy are now offered in Canada and doctoral degrees are available in the US, and new patient populations, including abused women and women in childbirth, are benefiting from treatment.

Music therapists use a variety of techniques. They may employ relaxation techniques to help cardiac patients feel calmer, says Salmon, or AIDS patients might compose a song with the therapist or play a drum to express what is happening in their lives. When a patient has Alzheimer's disease, the therapist might try to achieve a momentary connection by singing songs that were signifi-

cant in the person's life. And as a pain-management tool, music may distract patients, helping them to relax.

Sometimes, adds Salmon, music helps patients let go and die more peacefully. "When a patient is close to death, music can help create a sense of calm in the room. Sometimes I'll sing or play in rhythm with a patient's laboured breathing, gradually modifying the music to a more regular or slower rhythm. In many cases, the patient's respirations seem to follow the music, becoming slower and more relaxed." — © *Janice Hamilton*

Seal-oil capsules enter market

Two Newfoundland companies are trying to convince Canadians to pop a few seal-oil capsules every day — along with their multivitamins or calcium supplements. Canomega Industries of Brigus and Seafreez Foods Inc. of St. John's both make their own brand of capsule. The oil is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are believed to be useful for treating several medical conditions.

Seafreez has been selling its seal-oil products in the Asian market for several years, and introduced

its Omega 3 Plus capsules in Canada last November. "People in Asia have a long history of using seal oil so they were very receptive to our product," says Karl Sullivan, vice-president of Seafreez. "The next logical step was to target Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver, which have large Asian communities."

Canomega also had plans to break into the Southeast Asia market, but the company had to shift gears quickly when Newfoundland's fisheries minister started extolling the benefits of seal oil in his speeches.

Seal oil (continued on next page)