

# the beat

News for and by Fraser Health employees



*Megumi Gill, music therapist at Czorny Alzheimer Centre*

## Creating connections through music therapy

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Megumi (Okubo) Gill became interested in music therapy after witnessing the therapeutic benefits of music for children with special needs. Megumi left Japan to follow her passion and enrolled in the music therapy program at Capilano University in North Vancouver. Since graduation, she has

worked in a variety of practice settings including maternity and palliative care. She has been the music therapist at the Czorny Alzheimer Centre since it opened nine years ago.

Music therapy is uniquely effective for individuals with dementia and for whom language has become challenging or lost. Music accesses remote memories and emotion centres of the brain and can evoke non-verbal communication and connections not possible through other therapies.

In her role, Megumi skillfully uses music to connect with residents with Alzheimer's disease. Music brings familiarity, comfort and joy to residents experiencing cognitive decline. Music has immediate soothing benefits and has been shown to be effective in decreasing agitation and behavioral problems. Megumi has observed that music also helps to promote connections between residents and their family members during the music therapy program.

Music therapy has been proven effective with individuals of all ages and abilities. Goals of music therapy intervention include:

- Improve communication skills
- Facilitate learning skills
- Assist with processing of complex emotional issues
- Promote independent mobility
- Provide alternate forums for self-expression

In addition to completing two Bachelor's degrees in Music and Music Therapy, and a Master of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology, Megumi holds the Music Therapists Accredited (MTA) designation. MTA music therapists have completed the certification process including completion of 1000 hours of supervised internship with their national association. Competencies include:

- Knowledge of music and its impact on human behavior
- Advanced music skills including the use of clinical improvisation
- Understanding of psychosocial and neuro-biological development
- Understanding of characteristics and needs associated with different pathologies

There are just a few music therapists working across Fraser Health. Please join in recognising their important contribution to patient, client and resident care during **National Music Therapy Awareness Month**.