Swedish Perspectives on Music/Health Research – Live from Harvard Medical School

February 23 @ 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm EST

Join us for this hybrid event live from Harvard Medical School, where we will explore unexpected findings from Swedish researchers in the music and health field. We will delve into the question of which results are true and discuss the importance of applied research in this field.

It has been observed that in some countries, policy-makers are not paying enough attention to research results, partly due to the sheer volume of research being produced. Unfortunately, this often leads to policy-makers selecting results that align with their own biases, which prevents meaningful dialogue between them and researchers. Research in the music and health field is particularly important as it has the potential to stimulate the development of brain functions, so we must advocate for inclusion of music for the health of our communities.

We will also explore the importance of unexpected findings, as they may point to important mechanisms, and discuss the need to be particularly energetic in discussing findings that go against our own hypotheses. We will
Registration required for both in person and virtual participants. Please RSVP here by February 17th.

The address if you will join us in person is:
Countway Library, First-floor classrooms
10 Shattuck Street, Boston, MA

Töres Theorell is a physician. His research has been in stress medicine and psychosomatics. He was director of the National Institute for Psychosocial Factors and Health 1995-2006 and at the same time Professor of Psychosocial Medicine at the Karolinska Institute. The research methodology has ranged from epidemiological studies to longitudinal psychophysiological observational and experimental studies, as well as controlled interventions. Theorell has supervised over 40 doctoral theses. Theorell is now research consultant at the Institute for Psychosocial Factors and Health and at the Royal College of Music.

Eva Bojner Horwitz, professor of Music and Health at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and researcher at the Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society, Karolinska Institute (KI). She is specialized in psychosomatic medicine and the creative arts; co-founder of the Center for Social Sustainability (CSS), KI and anchored in interdisciplinary research, combining quantitative (stress hormone analyses, heart rate variability, video analyses) with qualitative research.
PhD student Kaja Korošec is a psychologist and a violinist interested in the well-being of musicians and the ways in which music can support the well-being of societies. She is pursuing her PhD in music and health at the Karolinska institute and the Royal College of music in Stockholm. Her research is focused on the roles and meanings of music for autistic adults.

The researchers will give examples from music/health research showing unexpected results – such findings may point at important mechanisms.

Professor Theorell’s four examples:

1. Swedish twin research shows strong genetic component in association between life-long music practicing and emotional competence, but brain pictures still show effects of music training on emotion-related brain structures
2. Effect of two-month intervention with scheduled every-day music listening on stress hormones in home care Alzheimer patient-caregiver dyads was studied. Results showed compared to controls reduced physiological stress during music intervention period in caregivers but not in patients.
3. Six-year oldsters were fascinated by listening to Beethoven’s Appassionata – contrary to expectations.
4. Self-selected arousal music was shown to increase both heart rate and breathing with reduced pCO2 whereas self-selected calming music has less significant but still tachycardic effect although there was no effect on breathing and pCO2 at all. What is the phylogenetic meaning of this?

Professor Bojner Horwitz will focus on music and health in relation to social sustainability, inner transformation and creativity seen from students’ perspectives. “Sing health in schools”; ”music and learning environments”; “knowledge concerts” and new evaluation methods will be in her focus.

PhD student Korošec will present the current state of research in the intersection between music and autism. She will discuss the importance of including subjective perspectives and how the lack of those in the past research has affected how we use and understand music in regard to autism.

Unexpected findings should sometimes be applauded – they may point at important mechanisms. We should also be particularly energetic in discussing findings that go against our own hypotheses. In communication with politicians and journalists both advantages and drawbacks should be discussed, and long-term perspectives emphasized more actively.

Our findings will be discussed in relation to society’s use of music/health knowledge.

This event will be moderated by Dr. Jennifer Zuk.
Jennifer Zuk, PhD CCC-SLP, is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Communication and Neurodevelopment Lab at Boston University. She is a clinical researcher working at the intersection of music cognition, developmental cognitive neuroscience, speech-language pathology, and education. Her research examines relationships between music, language, and the brain in early childhood with an interest in the potential for music to facilitate language development in children with neurodevelopmental disorders.