

Singing could be a cost-effective way to improve the health of people with degenerative lung disease

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Ground breaking research, carried out by Canterbury Christ Church University, has found that group singing can improve the health and quality of life of people living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

Around 800,000 people in the UK have been diagnosed with COPD and the NHS has estimated that a further two million people are living with the disease and have not been diagnosed.

The Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health at Canterbury Christ Church University has published their research, *An evaluation of community singing for people with COPD*, which has discovered some life changing conclusions for people living with COPD.

Professor Stephen Clift, Director of the research project within the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, said: "For the first time, this new research has shown that regular group singing can help to improve breathing and general [wellbeing](#).

"The positive improvements found in the participant's lung functions were very encouraging, especially given that a decline in these measures might have been expected as COPD is a deteriorating disease.

"We have found that group singing is an innovative initiative to help

people with COPD engage in physical and social activity to support their independence and [quality of life](#), giving them [social inclusion](#).

"The study was supported by the British Lung Foundation, and we will be working with them to explore ways of promoting more singing groups for people with COPD."

The aim of the report was to explore the feasibility of weekly community singing for people with COPD and to assess impact on lung function, functional capability, [breathlessness](#) and quality of life.

COPD is a progressive illness that worsens over time and over the ten week period that the research was taking place it would be expected for a decline in health to occur.

The final report, published by the Sidney De Haan Centre for Arts and Health, provides evidence showing that participants reported improvements in their breathing, activity levels and wellbeing and that the singing groups were enjoyable social events.

Over one hundred patients with COPD, ranging from mild to very severe were recruited into the study from across East Kent. Participants took part in ninety minutes group sessions where they spent thirty minutes socialising with their peers, twenty minutes of relaxation, posture and breathing exercises and forty minutes of singing.

The capacities of the lungs of individuals were measured before the start of the project and the end revealing significant improvements in breathing. Questionnaires widely used in medical research with people with breathing difficulties were also used in the research which showed changes to the participant's quality of life.

Over a period of 36 weeks, between September 2011 and June 2012,

group singing sessions were held for people with COPD and their friends, families and carers. The group participants were invited, through their local GP's, to attend a ninety minute group singing session every week. After each session the [lung function](#) of the participants was measured and personal comments were recorded as part of a self-assessment.

The finding of the study suggest that singing is perceived as both acceptable and beneficial to this group, not only for breathing but also in relation to general physical, psychological and social wellbeing. Participants were able to identify various mechanisms whereby benefits were accrued which will benefit the Sidney De Haan's future research into Singing and Health.

Provided by Canterbury Christ Church University

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