

Baycrest launches study combining music and brain stimulation to improve memory

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Dr. Claude Alain, assistant director and senior scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute (RRI). Credit: Baycrest Health Sciences

Baycrest will embark on the first study combining music therapy with brain stimulation to improve memory among patients with Mild

Cognitive Impairment (MCI).

This study could pave the way to developing an affordable and easy-to-use treatment for MCI patients, who face a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Claude Alain, assistant director and senior scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute (RRI), will work with MCI patients to study the benefits of listening to music they enjoyed in the past, paired with Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS) - a non-invasive and painless form of [brain stimulation](#) that transmits a very low-intensity current through the skull.

Research has demonstrated that listening to music improves the mood and well-being of [older adults](#) with dementia, and may also stimulate social interaction by "bringing back" past memories for these patients.

"Somehow music activates memories in [dementia patients](#), which in turn leads to more social engagement and interaction with caregivers," says Dr. Alain, who is also a psychology professor at the University of Toronto. "Brain stimulation has also been shown to temporarily improve a person's memory and attention, but the reason it helps is still unclear.

"By combining personalized music choices with tDCS, we aim to strengthen the unique brain pathway music uses to activate memories and improve the effectiveness of this musical intervention among patients who are starting to experience memory issues."

There are few treatments available to improve or slow down memory decline among MCI patients.

Currently, the study is recruiting older adults with [mild cognitive impairment](#). Anyone interested in participating can visit

<http://www.baycrest.org/participate/participate-in-research/> or leave a message at: 416-785-2500 ext. 2080.

Provided by Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care

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