

Scoping review explores music-based movement therapy

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Ronnie Gardiner method practiced by a group in the Netherlands comprising people suffering from MS, stroke or Parkinson's disease. Credit: Tore Marklund

Music-based movement therapy, known as the Ronnie Gardiner method, has the potential to contribute to rehabilitation after a stroke and in other brain disorders. These are the results of a scoping review from the University of Gothenburg.

The Ronnie Gardiner method was developed by and named after the popular Swedish-American jazz drummer Ronald "Ronnie" Gardiner, born in 1932. The method is used in rehabilitation in Sweden and internationally, but there has not been a comprehensive scientific

overview of any functional improvements when the method is applied, and how instructors and participants perceive it.

The current review, [published](#) in the journal *Disability and Rehabilitation*, compiles the purposes for which the Ronnie Gardiner method is used within health care. The study also explores the potential benefits of the method.

"There is no doubt that in practice the method brings joy to participants in an often challenging life situation with long-term rehabilitation needs," says Petra Pohl, physiotherapist and assistant professor at Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, and responsible for the study.

Complement to regular rehab

Pohl has been studying the method for more than 15 years and has previously evaluated it for people with Parkinson's disease and stroke. The previous studies showed that the method is appreciated exactly for its playfulness and pleasant setting with uplifting music, and [social context](#) in a group.

"This is a fun and engaging approach, and something out of the ordinary. It challenges both cognition and [motor skills](#) at the same time," says Pohl.

The method is based on rhythm and movements, such as hand clapping and foot stomping, based on a two-color note system where the left half of the body follows red notes and the right half blue notes while the mouth is forming rhythmic sounds. Many things are put to the test at the same time: motor skills, sense of rhythm, dual-task, coordination, memory, endurance and more.

What emerges from the current review study, which aims to provide an overview of the results of previous publications within the field, both quantitative and qualitative studies, is that the Ronnie Gardiner method could serve as a valuable addition to traditional neurological rehabilitation.

Method on the rise

The potential benefits of stroke rehabilitation are the best documented, while the results from other conditions are more inconclusive. Of the 23 studies included in the review, the majority were not peer-reviewed, and are therefore not given the same weight.

From the qualitative studies included, it appears that the Ronnie Gardiner method is perceived as challenging, motivating and enjoyable by participants, and many experienced improved recovery and quality of life.

"The method has reached an international arena, and many things suggest that it will be used more in [rehabilitation](#) contexts in the future. It is therefore important that it is studied, especially in controlled trials, for better validation," says Pohl.

More information: Laura Harjunen et al, Scoping review of the music-based movement therapy Ronnie Gardiner Method, *Disability and Rehabilitation* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/09638288.2024.2392037](https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2024.2392037)

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