

BULLETIN

While health authorities continue to eliminate services, film highlights value of music therapy

March 26, 2012

On the heels of yet another reorganization that means the loss of music therapy services for BC patients, the Music Therapy Association of BC will highlight the value of music therapy with the screening of the documentary, *The Gift of Music: Stories of Music Therapy* this week at the Vancity Theatre in Vancouver.

This month, through a reorganization of therapeutic services, Lions Gate Hospitals Evergreen House music therapy program was eliminated.

Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) is the union that represents 17,000 members of the modern health care team, including just over 40 music therapists, most of whom work in part time or casual positions in hospitals and extended care facilities.

-Music therapy is one of the therapies that is the first to go when health authorities look for cost savings," said HSA President Reid Johnson. -Its seen as a "frill service, but the value of the therapy proves otherwise."

Susan Summers is president of the Music Therapy Association of BC and has seen services erode over the past several years. She worries that the continued hunt for savings will result in more loss of services.

-Everyone has a relationship with music, crossing all cultures, languages, and ages. Trained music therapists working with the elderly use music to address non-musical therapeutic outcomes such as maintaining their ability to talk, swallow and eat, learning to communicate verbally after having a stroke, motivating someone to learn to walk again, and eliminating agitation and aggression for a person with dementia who is sundowning.

-Participation in music therapy programs increases feelings of self worth, accomplishment and enjoyment, which are essential for a person's quality of life in their elder years " Summers said.

-Music therapists meet clients where they are, and can work with anyone, regardless of ability or challenge. Music therapy is cost effective and provides a therapeutically effective treatment service that should be essential to all interdisciplinary medical teams in BC" she said.

Thursdays screening of *The Gift of Music: Stories of Music Therapy* is this week at the Vancity Theater in Vancouver at 7 p.m. For ticket information, www.mtabc.com.

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