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Proposal for Research Project (draft)

Suggested Title: **The Effects of Daily Toning on Individuals with Early Stage Dementia**

Introduction

There have been numerous recent articles documenting the benefits of music with the elders. One article claims that a man in his 70's with Alzheimer's who was not talking, joined a choir offered in his community and exhibited a dramatic improvement after several weeks, having clear conversations with his spouse and illustrated a new sense of well-being to witnesses aware of his history. Another story reports that when Karaoke is provided to seniors at an assisted-living facility, the elders who are usually quiet, suddenly come alive and that for a few moments each week, they're participating with others in something they can still do and their cloudy minds become clear with rhythm and sound that fosters memories of yesteryear.

While there are many theories and thoughts about why music is important for the brain and, in particular, the aging brain, few studies or research has presented scientific evidence or documentation illustrating the clear benefits of singing or toning for our aging population.

Of particular interest to me, is the question of whether daily toning would benefit elders who are in the early stages of dementia. I am interested in conducting a 6-week study with a group of elders who have been assessed and fit within a similar defined level of cognitive abilities and who have early stage dementia, and who would participate in a daily 15 minute toning exercise to observe and see what the effects or benefits might be.

Method

In order to test the impact of daily toning on elders with early stage Alzheimer's, I would first need to carefully select elders who fit a similar scale of cognitive abilities, based on their progress of Alzheimer's, who would be willing to participate in the study. Preliminary measurements would be conducted via neurological assessments to measure their 1) alertness, 2) cognitive skills, 3) memory and 4) emotional well-being. Then through dialog and discussion with the elder, another measurement would be done to measure their 1) level of current satisfaction and contentment, 2) level of self-esteem, 3) experience of isolation and social skills, and 4) problem-solving, i.e., are they able to find solutions for simple challenges during the day.

Once the measurements and assessments are complete, daily 15-minute sessions of toning will be conducted with the subjects for 6 weeks. After 3 weeks, the subjects will be re-assessed for 1) alertness, 2) cognitive skills, 3) memory and 4) emotional well-being. Again, through conversation with the elders, they will also be measured for 1) level of satisfaction and contentment, 2) level of self-esteem, 3) experience of isolation and/or social skills, and 4) problem-solving skills. These will be documented in a chart and then repeated after 6 weeks. Results of the experiment will be compared to a control group of

individuals with a similar cognitive ability and development of the disease who are not participating in the daily toning.

The hypothesis being that daily toning with elders who have early stage dementia will illustrate physical, emotional and/or mental benefits.

Participants

Five volunteer participants will be selected from the population of residents at the AgeSong Senior Communities and each will go through a thorough assessment of their cognitive level and current personal life satisfaction before beginning the research project.