



Editorial

Wenche Torrissen & Anita Jensen

Editors-in-chief

wenche.torrissen@hivolda.no / anita.jensen@skane.se

We warmly welcome you to the first issue of the *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health* (NJACH). The ideas and visions behind the journal were born at an arts and health conference in London four years ago, and with the tremendous support of our institutions, affiliated institutions, colleagues and the Scandinavian University Press (Universitetsforlaget AS), these ideas and visions have now finally materialised in a new journal. Academics from all the arts disciplines and from a variety of healthcare settings, representing all the Nordic countries, have contributed in the planning and shaping of the journal. As such, this is an ambitious and unique undertaking that can be considered a milestone in the context of the Nordic Arts and Health field. As editors of this new interdisciplinary open access publication, we aim to provide a platform for dissemination of Nordic and international arts and health research and practice. The hope is that the journal can bring together artists, academics, arts and health practitioners, arts therapists, politicians, pedagogues and health and social care professionals in an ongoing dialogue about the ways in which the arts can impact on our health and wellbeing.

The therapeutic value of the arts has a long standing in the Nordic countries. Songs, music, dancing, theater and storytelling were integral elements of the Shamanistic healing rituals that both our Norse ancestors and our Sámi ancestors were practising for centuries until Christianity and the law slowly suppressed these practices and rendered them extinct. Based on the few written sources we have, the shamanistic healing rituals were collective events that contributed to both individual and community health. In short, our ancestors knew that aesthetics can stimulate our senses in ways that make us happier and healthier, and they used the arts both in health care practices and to regulate emotions in their everyday life. This knowledge has re-emerged and developed into a new field of scientific inquiry.

The existing field

Over the last thirty years or so we have seen a renewed and growing interest in how the arts can contribute to health, wellbeing, healthcare practice and social inclusion in the Nordic countries. In the last decade, the arts and health movement has gathered considerable momentum with an increased focus on how the arts can contribute towards meeting the complex health care problems that we face in a life-course perspective; how the arts can humanise healthcare; and how the arts can enhance wellbeing. Seen together, arts and health is an innovative field that is developing fast, and many people, events, practices, and

organisations have worked together to move the arts and health agenda forward in Nordic contexts. To mention a few developments, the NaKuHel (NatureCultureHealth) foundation was established in 1994 on the initiative of Gunnar Tellnes. Today, NaKuHel organisations throughout Norway use nature and cultural activities to promote health, quality of life and better environments for individuals and communities (Tellnes, 2017). The first ever survey of culture and health / arts and health in the Nordic region was carried out in 2013/2014. Region Skåne in Sweden was given the assignment and published the report 'Turning Point: Proposals about culture and health in Nordic collaboration' [Vändpunkt: Förslag om kultur och hälsa i nordisk Samverkan] (Austin, 2014). The survey does not claim to be all-encompassing, but even this relatively limited overview indicates that there is an extensive, vibrant and steadily increasing interest in and awareness of the topic with a wealth of grassroots activity and government-initiated projects. In this decade, we have seen the establishment of national and regional arts and health centres across the Nordic region that work to strengthen the field in terms of both practice and research. We have also seen an extensive interest in research on cultural activities and health, ranging from literature, visual arts, dance, theatre and musical activities. Furthermore, programmes of education in the arts and health have emerged in a number of institutions, and an increasing number of PhDs have graduated in the field. All this has contributed to a growing understanding of how the arts can be used to promote health and wellbeing. Moreover, there are several academic and non-academic networks that, in various ways and from different perspectives, focus on arts and health. Examples of these are: Nordic Network for Research in Music & Public Health, Nordic Network for Narratives in Medicine, and Nordic Arts & Health Research Network.

The field of arts and health is extensive and there are many ways of understanding this expanding, interdisciplinary area of practice, research and education. In the UK report 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing', published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing in 2017, the following eight areas are included under the umbrella of arts and health: "Arts in Health and care environments; participatory arts programmes; arts therapies; arts on prescription; medical training and medical humanities; everyday creativity; attendance at cultural venues and events and the built and natural environments" (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2017). *The Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health* embraces this broad and inclusive definition. We are not asking our contributors to agree with this definition, and we welcome critical perspectives, but we hope that academics and practitioners from all these areas will contribute to developing this journal and together move the field forward.

In our work with this journal, we have found encouragement and inspiration from our sister journals in the UK: *Arts & Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice* and *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*. We would like to thank the editors and the contributors to these journals for the ways in which they have contributed towards establishing the arts and health field internationally. We are also encouraged by political developments in countries such as Finland, Norway, Sweden, England and Australia, proving that the arts and health agenda is taken seriously at political levels. We are also pleased to acknowledge that the World Health Organization (WHO) has recently taken an interest in the field, and that they have undertaken major work to investigate how arts and culture can contribute to the promotion, prevention, treatment and management of health and wellbeing. The WHO report 'What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review' (Fancourt & Finn, 2019) was launched 11 November 2019 in Finland, and with over 900 publications, including 200 reviews covering over 3000 further studies, it represents the most comprehensive evidence review of arts and health to date.

New Nordic journal

Although arts and health practice and research in the Nordic context is a growing field, there has not been a shared multi-disciplinary platform for dissemination of knowledge and research. Our aims for the journal are to publish a wide range of articles, notes from the field and reviews that reflect the current state of the arts and health field in the Nordic countries as well as from international perspectives. Furthermore, we wish to provide a place where this research and information can be accessed by individuals who are interested in knowing more about the field. By sharing ideas, best practice, solutions and research about arts and cultural activities that can contribute to health promotion, prevention, treatment, recovery and care, the journal provides a resource for researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and other stakeholders from the broader public.

Understanding health beyond the traditional scope of physical, mental and social perspectives, the journal considers health from a broad perspective including emotional, cultural, existential, spiritual, occupational and community health. Encompassing the breadth and interdisciplinarity of the arts and health field, it is envisaged that research and practice experience from different sectors and a variety of disciplines, as well as different methodological and theoretical approaches, will be included in the journal.

The health and social care sectors across the world are currently experiencing many problems in need of innovative solutions. It is, for example, estimated that global mental health problems account for 30% of non-fatal diseases, and WHO expects that the worldwide mental health costs will reach \$6 trillion by 2030. As international evidence suggests, participating in arts activities can have a positive impact on mental health. Evidence also indicates that arts and health projects are cost-effective ways of dealing with mental health problems. The hope is thus that the journal will contribute to the development of innovative ideas and possible solutions that can support the implementation of policies for arts and health activities across borders and disciplines in terms that will have direct impact on combatting mental health problems, as well as other health related issues.

In each issue of the journal, we will present three to four peer-reviewed research articles alongside notes from the field. Notes from the field may include practice-based reports, opinion pieces and reviews of books, conferences or events, and are not peer-reviewed.

We are proud to present the first issue of the *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health* to our colleagues all over the world. We are pleased about the range of perspectives that are presented in this inaugural issue. We believe that this reflects the multifaceted complexity of the subject area under investigation in this journal.

In the first article, Professor Norma Daykin contributes with the article 'Social Movement and boundary work in arts, health and wellbeing: a research agenda'. In her discursive article, Daykin critically examines the international field of arts, health and wellbeing, drawing on literature from several disciplines including arts and health, social and political sciences, and organisational studies. Daykin delivers insightful perspectives on a field that have experienced difficulties surrounding research and evidence and she offers new frameworks that may help to address critical questions about the development, scope and impact of arts, health and wellbeing.

Professor Emeritus Lars Ole Bonde provides an in-depth overview of music and health promotion through music activities and interventions in Danish and Nordic hospitals over the past 20 years. In his article, 'Musik og sundhedsfremme i Danmark og i norden – hvem og hvordan?' [Music and health promotion in Denmark and the Nordic region – who and how?], Bonde discusses theoretical rationales and practical problems that relates to these relatively new initiatives and contributes with his own experience from being an active stake-

holder, clinician and researcher for many years. This article illustrates appropriately some of the dilemmas that exists in the field.

In the third article, Professor Emeritus Töres Theorell, Dr. Jan Kowalski and Professor Eva Bojner Horwitz examine to what extent music listening can alleviate worry. With their pilot study, 'Music listening as distraction from everyday worries', the authors examine the differences and similarities for audiences of different ages regarding the capacity of music to distract them from worries, and they discuss the relationship between music, education and health. Theorell and colleagues ask questions such as: 'What is the "average magnitude" of worry distraction in different situations? How much dispersion is there? Do old and young people differ with regard to worry distraction while listening to classical music? Do people with prior knowledge of music differ from others in their worry distraction?' This contribution brings a focus on how classical music can be a beneficial tool in dealing with everyday worries.

In the final article, PhD researcher Collette Adams and Associate Professor Theo Stickley review the literature on group arts activities and arts therapies and their role in enabling recovery for individuals using substances, which is an area that has, to date, not been widely researched. In their article, 'Group arts activities and arts therapies for people using substances: A rapid review of the literature', the authors present 28 articles and discuss the studies through six different categories. The article explores, among other things, the significance of individuals using the arts to enable discussion about ambivalence towards change and reflections on own behaviour, which might not have been possible in talking therapies about substance misuse. Adams and Stickley bring to the forefront an area of arts and health that is currently under-researched and that may benefit from further attention.

In the non-peer reviewed section, PhD researcher Gemma Goodall presents a review of the Nordic Arts and Health Conference, which took place 21 May 2019 in Malmö, Sweden. Arts & Health developer Birgitta Miguel-Sandberg offers a review of an Arts and Health Symposium at WHO Regional Office Copenhagen held on 22 March 2019. Both reviews demonstrate the current political interest in and the general enthusiasm for arts and health initiatives in the Nordic countries right now.

Our editorial board and beneficiaries

Our editorial board comprises an international remit of experience and expertise across various disciplines including the arts, music therapy, social sciences, medicine and education. Our current editorial board members are based in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and the UK. We sincerely thank you for all your support and for your enthusiasm for the project. We also want to acknowledge the expertise and commitment of the additional reviewers who have supported the publication of the first issue and whom will continue to contribute to NJACH. Finally, we want to thank all the sponsors for making the journal possible. In order to keep NJACH an open access journal, we have received support from various institutions and organisations. The Norwegian Resource Centre for Arts and Health has agreed to hold the legal and financial responsibility for the project for the first three years. Without the generosity, vision and foresight and of the centre's leader and board, there would have been no journal. Immense gratitude also goes to the other stakeholders in the journal: Volda University College, Norway; Primary Healthcare, Region Skåne, Sweden; Aalborg University, Denmark; Royal College of Music, Sweden; Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland and Uniarts Helsinki's CERADA Research Centre, Finland. Additional

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We hope that many of you feel encouraged to submit your work to the *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health*. We welcome contributions in Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and English. In 2020 we will publish two issues of the journal and in 2021 the goal is to increase publication to three issues per volume. Please visit the journal's website at https://www.idunn.no/nordic_journal_of_arts_culture_and_health to find out more about the journal, our board members and how to submit articles.

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