MIDDEL Project Newsletter No. 5

Dear MIDDEL colleagues,

This is an informal update on the MIDDEL-project, and our newsletter No. 5. The graphic below sums it all up!

With the holiday season just around the corner, we find ourselves reflecting on the extraordinary journey we embarked on together a few years ago, and how it is now coming to an end. The official project period of MIDDEL concludes on Dec 31st 2023 — on which day we can expect to see that people all over the world will be celebrating the projects' accomplishments with fireworks, music and champagne! 😋✨

Let us take a moment to look back at the final year of MIDDEL and what we were up to:

By the end of January 2023, recruitment and randomisation of participating care home units was completed. This also meant that the last baseline assessments had been carried out, and we had the complete international sample for the MIDDEL project safely stored in our database. *We reached the impressive number of 86 care home units across the six countries, and exceeded our goal of more than 1000 residents.* Behind this lie countless hours of determined work by researchers and research assistants, PhD-students, coordinators, assessors, and nurses, who have sought out and enrolled care homes, collected informed consent forms from residents and their families, conducted assessments, entered them electronically, and finally randomised the units into the four groups to be investigated. It is with great joy that we extend our warmest thanks to every one of you who played a role in this pivotal work to secure a sufficient sample size for the MIDDEL project.

Throughout the year, various experiences and findings from the ongoing project were disseminated at national and international conferences across the world. At the 33rd "Annual Meeting of the American Neuropsychiatric Association" in Boston in March, prof. Christian Gold gave a presentation about *Active music-making for improving depressive symptoms and cognition in dementia and mental illness,* as part of the ANPA Presidential Symposium "Music and the Brain". In July, MIDDEL researchers from Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, and the UK participated in the 17th "World Congress of Music Therapy" in Vancouver. Their presentations involved *the biomarker substudy; findings from the Australian cohort; the broader context of international studies on music interventions; and user engagement within and beyond our project.* In September, one of the music therapists from the Norwegian part of the project, Stine Sognnes, presented *a clinical story about music interventions for dementia and depression in elderly care* at "Nordisk Sangsymposium" in Oslo. Joanne Ablewhite and Jodie Bloska from the UK team presented their experiences about *Implementing an intervention trial in residential care* at the 33rd "Alzheimer Europe conference: New opportunities in dementia care, policy and research" in Helsinki in October, and in November prof. Felicity Baker, head of the Australian team, gave an opening keynote presentation about *Music therapy solutions for improved dementia* at the 56th Australian Association of Gerontology Conference "Reimagining Ageing: Diving into an ocean of possibilities" in Queensland.

In-person meeting and public seminar in Bergen: MIDDEL researchers from the five European countries have had the luxury of meeting in person several times during the project period, starting with the kick-off in Vienna in Feb 2020, followed by sunshiny Ankara in Sept 2022. In April this year it was time for a trip to (the perhaps a little bit rainier) Bergen, Norway. We met in the "wheelhouse" of the MIDDEL project at the Grieg Academy Music Therapy Research Centre, to share updates from each country and to discuss sub-projects, project completion and publications—but also to enjoy dining, hiking, sightseeing, and singing together. 😉 We hosted an open seminar "Implementation of

music therapy and other music interventions in dementia care" at the University of Bergen on April 26th, where we heard about the experiences of care home residents, relatives of people with dementia, music interventionists, care staff, and researchers across countries, both within and beyond the MIDDEL project.

End of data collection: The late summer and autumn marked the end of the 6-month follow-up (primary time-point) for the last participants in MIDDEL. Data was entered, double checked, and exported from REDCap. The 12-month data has also been collected in most places, though some of the last care home units will not be conducting long-term follow-up due to timing and practical reasons. Another milestone involved the **completed data collection for the biomarker substudy**, with more than 1000 saliva samples and 500 hair samples collected in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway! The samples were sent to the University of Vienna in October for analysis, and we await the results with great excitement.

Meanwhile, the Norwegian core team have recently performed the first main analyses of effects. Many of you were present at the online partner meeting last week, where these confidential and unpublished results were first shared and discussed. Although we still must play with our cards close to the chest, it is no secret that these findings will make an important contribution to the fields of non-pharmacological interventions and elderly care! We hope to submit the main effects paper for publication next summer.

It feels sad in a way to sign off this last Christmas newsletter. But though this is the end of the MIDDEL project—at least formally—we now have a wealth of data to look deeper into in the months and years to come. Huge thanks to all the partners and colleagues, and to all the participating residents, staff and care homes who have made this project possible! The MIDDEL project has thrived because of the collective effort and expertise that each of you has brought to the table, and I look forward to continued collaborations in the future.

Best wishes for a wonderful Yuletide season, and a Happy New Year!
Vigdis, on behalf of the Norwegian team

The MIDDEL Christmas newsletter

2023 YEAR -IN- REVIEW

Total sample:

86 CHUs

with a total of **1021** residents

Misc. data:

PANDEMICS SURVIVED	1
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS	232
CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS	7
BIOMARKER SAMPLES	>1500

2023 highlights / favorite moments

- In-person meeting in Bergen
- Biomarker data sent for analysis
- Recruitment finalized
- Data collection completed

Merry Christmas   Frohe Weihnachten   Mutlu Noeller   Zalig Kerstfeest   God jul!