“Music has an incredible capacity to reach out and search for the healthy part of an individual” states Ceridwen Rees (p.81). In reading these accounts, I felt inspired by the honesty of the authors in examining their work and their music-making with these children and also empathized with their uncertainties in providing music therapy in a setting which often calls for the therapist to be in the “unknown” space with their client/s. Mercédés Pavlicevic says in her introduction (p.16), “one of the deliciously intimate things about music therapy is the feeling of being heard”. In this book both the therapist and the clients’ stories can be heard. We recurrently hear questions about how to approach their clients at particular moments, about what music therapy can offer to a child in their last moments when perhaps it is also their first encounter with music therapy.

In sum, this would be valuable resource for those music therapists working in paediatric palliative care. It can be read as a whole or in parts as the testimony of music therapists who have been privileged to accompany clients on their journey through life-limiting, life-threatening illnesses, and have observed the unique value of creative music making in this setting.

Louise Miles, RMT
Redkite Music Therapist, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, Perth.


Given the title of this new book edited by David Aldridge, one would expect an authoritative text with contributions from well-established experts in the field and comprehensive references from the considerable body of existing literature on music therapy in neurological rehabilitation. With the exception of a few chapters, this is not the case.

In reading the early chapters, I was unsure of the intended audience. A focus on statistical analysis is rather beyond the clinician reader, and yet not appropriate for colleagues familiar with research principles who wish to read about music therapy in neuro-rehabilitation. Principles central to music therapy practice and theory are presented which would be novel for those outside of the profession and of interest to the student reader. Thought-provoking material is presented, however, absent referencing to wider sources weakens the arguments. In particular there is little acknowledgement of music therapy publications in neurology, with heavy referencing instead of Aldridge’s own works. With no substantiating references to the existing
empirical work, the claims made about music therapy can easily be discounted by the sceptical, or taken as truth by the naïve. This is disappointing.

There appears to have been an oversight in citing sources or quotations correctly in the sections on the epidemiology and features of Multiple Sclerosis and Huntington’s Disease. For example, “Emotional disorders, behavioural problems and personality change may be experienced, leading to psychiatric symptoms (Folstein, Folstein & McHugh, 1975; Morris, 1991)” (pp.41) is nearly identical to a phrase appearing in Magee (1999, p.83). There are several more examples of sentences identical to those in Magee (1999) throughout this chapter which cannot be cited here due to the need for brevity. This does not instil confidence in the accuracy of the references provided.

In Chapter 4 there is a change in style and content as Hanne Mette Ridder provides a thorough literature review using systematic qualitative analysis of music therapy and music-related work with people with dementia. This is where I felt the book really got going. Research and descriptive reports from a variety of sources are reviewed, with some transferability to wider related neurological populations due to the categorisation of the studies. This chapter provides a wealth of information to the music therapy student, more experienced clinician and researcher, particularly for those wishing to access the most relevant publications to their practice.

Chapter 5 continues with refreshing clarity as Simon Gilbertson offers a review of music therapy after traumatic brain injury (TBI). The section on methodology is essential reading for anyone involved in literature searching regardless of the population being studied as many helpful tips are included. Clinician, student, and professional alike will find this useful, particularly in outlining the search strategies and processes. Gilbertson’s review demonstrates how inaccurate search strategies can result in misinformation being published – a devastating outcome for music therapy in its current drive to be accounted and provide an evidence base. Ample information is provided for a range of readers using tables to present detailed information concisely.

Chapter 6 shifts down several gears, examining the concept of ‘consciousness’ in (persistent) vegetative state (P)VS patients from philosophical, theological and ethical aspects. This chapter reads as a personal account from a subjective viewpoint. The immediate, inconsistent, and interchangeable use of four different terms in relation to the clinical group is confusing and misleading. Discussion of the issues is weakened through information which is incorrect and presented in an emotive way (see the discussion on ‘food deprivation’). As a clinician and academic with 14 years full-time experience with this population, I feel that this essay is possibly
misplaced in a book supposedly representing music therapy as it works in rehabilitation settings.

There is a welcome return to the clarity and style of the earlier chapters in the next chapter about music therapy in Multiple Sclerosis which provides a thorough overview of pertinent issues for those living with MS. A controlled pilot study is presented which used both qualitative analysis as well as quantitative data gained from standardised scales.

Chapter 8 presents a controlled study of a particular music-based treatment method for late stage rehabilitation of chronic aphasia. Despite lengthy reporting of significant positive results, the treatment protocol is never described, making replication by either clinician or researcher impossible.

The final chapters are also not representative of music therapy in neurological rehabilitation as it is practiced in Europe, the US or Australia. At the end of the book, I was still unsure of the target audience. This is not a book I would recommend to those wishing to gain a clear picture of music therapy in this field. As wider references on music therapy with neurological populations are largely absent from Chapters 1-3, 5 and 8, the book does not stand as an authoritative text for the reader who wants to be guided to the maximum number of sources about their area of interest. I would argue that the title suggests a much more representative view than is given.


Wendy Magee PhD RMT
International Research Fellow, Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability


This new book from JKP explores the various ways that humans seek altered states of consciousness, the reasons why, and the role that music plays in achieving, enhancing and maintaining these states. *Music and altered States* is a culturally rich and diverse book that examines aspects of music’s role in altering consciousness from Africa to Europe, from the US to the