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## Laurier to host national conference on music therapy

Music therapy, still pioneering for full acceptance as a professional discipline, is the subject of a national conference to be held at Wilfrid Laurier University May 10 to 12.

The 17th annual conference of the Canadian Association for Music Therapy, entitled Catalyst for Change, will draw about 250 registrants from the field of music therapy, related therapies and the medical profession.

They will explore the application of music therapy in palliative care and grief counselling and as a therapeutic intervention for people with AIDS, cancer, Alzheimer's Disease, head injuries, autism and other disabilities.

Some sessions will use musical instruments and even modelling clay in demonstrations.

Dr. Rosemary Fischer, conference chairperson and director of the music therapy program at Laurier, said participants will also be searching for ways to better establish the integrity of music therapy as a discipline with both the medical profession and the public at large.

"In our discipline, music is the catalyst for change," she said. "We hope the conference itself can serve as a catalyst for change in terms of our professional identity in the 1990s."

Fischer said there is a common misconception about music therapy. "It's not just 'Let's sing a song. That feels good.'"

She said the discipline uses music as a tool to achieve specific goals in the cognitive, emotional and physical domains. These goals are determined through assessment and implemented after careful treatment planning.

Laurier operates one of the country's three training programs for music therapists. The requirements of the four-year honors degree program, established in 1986, include the completion of four practica (about 10 facilities in the Kitchener-Waterloo area have participated) and a six-month internship upon graduation.

A music therapy clinic on campus gives students additional experience while serving the community. It treats both children and adults with a variety of disabilities, including head injuries, Down Syndrome and Alzheimer's disease.