



Figure 1. Performance of the Taiko-drum Team of Jerry Nursing Home at Taipei Arena on October 14, 2016 (Photograph obtained from Hondao Senior Citizen's Welfare Foundation)

## Drummers of age

In 2015 a drum team visited Jerry Nursing Home (Nantou country, Taiwan). Since most inhabitants loved the performance, Jerry's own team was established in October 2015. Assistive technology needed consisted of facilities to drum in the sitting position instead of standing up, and a large screen and loudspeakers for accompaniment. A typical drumming session starts with warming up (shouting aloud 'Ha', swinging arms and body), drumming practice with old songs<sup>1</sup>, and cooling down (normalizing breathing, releasing muscle tension).

## The team

There are 20 drummers in the team, aged 63 to 93 years (Figure 1), who all had to learn drumming from scratch. Seven members hold disability certification, one has dementia, another one is on dialysis, and nine require transition aids. At first the uninitiated drummers found it difficult to come to practice and couldn't see the point of drumming. They reluctantly learned drumming as if they were watching a show. They would just about follow the teacher like a puppet. Gradually, they could catch up with the rhythm and learned a short complete piece. They became more attentive and discovered a new love of interest. Now they will beat the drum as long as their hearts are still beating!

At first, the drummers didn't care about other people's presence and never interacted with others before, but now they noticed who is absent and show their concern. At the request of the drummers rehearsals increased from one to three times a week, and in 2017 a second team will start!

## Detailed observations

An 86-year-old grandma couldn't lift her arms before, now the practicing of the Taiko drum has become her magic medicine. A mentally disabled old

man couldn't concentrate when he started. Now he no longer dances to himself, but follows the teachers' instructions with great concentration and confidence. An elderly woman used to think of herself as useless and now would happily share the benefits of learning Taiko-drum with others with a big smile on her face. An elderly gentleman refused to join any activity before; after wandering and watching Taiko-drum team's rehearsals for a few days, he joined the team and never missed a practice ever since.

Physiotherapist and staff observed improvements of bodily functions, vital capacity, muscle strength, social behavior and quality of life of the drummers.

## Performance

Jerry's team (Figure 1) was one of the nine Taiwanese senior drum teams that performed in the Taipei Arena on October 14, 2016, together with a US senior hip-hop group. In total more than 2,000,000 life-years took part with 75 being the average age of the participating grandmothers, grandfathers, great-aunts and great-uncles.

The Jerry members not only had memorized all drum beatings, they had also worked out guest lists to invite audience for the performance. Lamenting about old age stopped. The drumming has not only given the drummers a new source of happiness but also a lively young heart.

## Reference

1. Taiko-drumming in Jerry Nursing Home (Nantou country, Taiwan): Practice and Performance. 2016; <https://www.facebook.com/joyce.xiao.940/posts/1044199475616543>; retrieved November 28, 2016

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