



English > Documentaries

Musica humana helps healing

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Going into hospital for an operation under general anaesthetic is for most people a very frightening experience, so doctors and musicians in Denmark have created a specially composed "sound environment" to use in hospitals to help patients relax and recover better.



Niels Eje and Lars Heslet

Lars Heslet is Professor of Intensive Care Medicine at Copenhagen State Hospital - so he is used to working in a hospital environment. But even he maintains that hospitals are daunting places to be in:

"It's a hostile environment, with a lot of technology, very haphazard interior decoration with lots of odd colours and it's often not very clean looking. So if patients are trying to extrapolate from what they see in the wards to the quality of treatment, they will be very scared..."

Which is why Professor Heslet has hung brightly coloured abstracts and other stimulating paintings around the wards and corridors of the Intensive Care Department of his hospital.

"I want to change the atmosphere so that patients feel that at least we're making an effort here."

Inner healing forces

But it's not just the visual environment of hospitals that needs to be "less hostile". Lars Heslet thinks you can help patients feel more relaxed and respond better to orthodox kinds of treatment by improving the sound environment. "If you look at a patient with a fracture, it's a miracle that the forces from within can heal that fracture. So what we want to do is to recruit and enhance that inner healing force . . . and we have thought of using music as an additional therapy."

Music as a healing force is not a new idea. People all over