

PREVALENCE OF PAIN/INJURY AMONG WIND CONDUCTORS

Statement of Problem

Currently, there is no specific research focusing on conducting related injuries. Although stories of conductor injuries are common, there is no data that documents the nature or prevalence of such injuries. This raises a number of questions requiring rigorous examination. Are conductor injuries a common occurrence? Conductors may experience aches, pains, and injuries just as other musicians and athletes do, but is such discomfort related to the same musculoskeletal issues? Are such injuries due to or only coincident with the act of conducting? Each of these questions needs to be addressed to raise awareness of potential physical stress, to support conductors' wellness, and to promote healthy and long lasting conducting careers.

Despite the lack of data specifically on conductor related injuries, there is research that has been conducted on musician and athlete health, wellness, and injuries. Researchers have shown that musicians develop musculoskeletal issues due to poor posture, overuse, and other pedagogical issues. How do conductors fit into this picture? Is physical discomfort reported by conductors due to musculoskeletal issues as well?

Among professional performing musicians, injuries to the upper arm, shoulder, and neck region have been found to be preventable and maintainable with physical therapy (Chan, Driscoll, and Ackermann, 2013). Such treatment may be an effective intervention for injuries among conductors, as well. Further research is needed to determine the degree to which injuries reported by conductors could be similar to those presented by other professional musicians. Unfortunately, musicians that sustain injuries find it difficult to find a healthcare provider that specializes in diagnosis of, prevention of, and recovery from performance related injury (Guptill, 2011). Likewise, healthcare providers may lack a thorough understanding of the practical demands unique to professional music performance (Guptill, 2011). Providing accessible and knowledgeable healthcare support could assist in preventing and treating musician injuries (Chan, Driscoll, and Ackermann, 2013). Nevertheless, the degree to which conductors experience such injuries remains unclear. Such injuries could be caused by poor posture, tension, size of gesture, or even overuse, particularly in the case of ensemble educators who may engage in conducting for hours many hours on a daily basis (Wiklund, Brulin, & Sundelin, 2003).

The proposed research is intended to establish an initial baseline providing evidence for the frequency of reported injuries or chronic discomfort among band conductors and to document self-reported descriptions of these afflictions. Prevalence of conducting related injuries would substantiate the need for further research into potential causes and ways conductors might manage injury or pain through such interventions as physical therapy (Chan and Ackermann, 2014), wellness classes, or guided physical activities.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gather evidence of injury or persistent and chronic problems among conductors.

Research Questions

Among the participants in this study, how prevalent and how frequently is conducting related pain/injuries reported? _

- What are the demographics of those who experience conducting related injuries?
- How are the participants describing the conducting related injuries?
- Is there a relationship between demographic variables and the type of conducting related injuries?

Method

A link to the following online survey will be sent to all members of College Band Directors National Association and National Band Association. Participants will include band directors throughout the United States and will represent all levels of teaching. The band directors contacted will also have permission to forward this survey to other directors in order to maximize the potential response pool. Through a series of multiple choice and free response questions, quantitative data will be collected regarding demographics, conducting variables, presence and location of pain/injury, and use of preventative measures. All responses will be anonymous. Participants will also have the option to indicate interest in participation in further research. Future research may include interviews, video analysis, and potential trial exercise regimen.

References:

Chan, C., & Ackermann, B. (2014). Evidence-informed physical therapy management of performance-related musculoskeletal disorders in musicians. *Frontiers in Psychology, 5*, 706. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00706

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Fjellman-Wiklund, A., Brulin, C., & Sundelin, G. (2003). Physical and psychosocial work related risk factors associated with neck-shoulder discomfort in male and female music teachers. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists, 18*(1), 33.

Guptill, C. A. (2011). The lived experience of professional musicians with playing-related injuries: A phenomenological inquiry. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists, 26*(2), 84.