

A preliminary review of current health promotion strategies among student and professional musicians

ONG Wei Ling (Waseda University, Graduate School of Human Sciences)

TAKENAKA Koji (Waseda University, School of Human Sciences, Dept of Health & Welfare Sciences)

Keywords: musicians' health promotion, playing-related musculoskeletal disorder prevention, music performance anxiety

Objective

Musicians require physical conditioning and preparation to perform at their best, and they can develop physical and mental problems as a result of their playing. Asymmetrical postures, lengthy practices, repetitive movements, are all contributing factors to musculoskeletal problems in musicians. These physical problems often require them to rest, which places a severe negative economic impact on the musician, resulting in them continuing playing despite the pain, progressively worsening the problem. Moreover, the stressful nature of the job and job environment, and music performance anxiety can also have detrimental effects on musicians' psychological health and musical performance quality.

Therefore, research for musician-specific physical and psychological health problems has begun to focus on facilitating prevention: to encourage disciplined practice, healthy playing habits, and detecting and acting upon early warning signs, in order to enhance their health and musical performance quality.

The objective of this review is to identify the current strategies, reported in studies, used to promote physical and psychological health among student and professional musicians so as to have a better understanding of the current situation in musician health promotion.

Method

The literature search was carried out using Google Scholar, which searches across scholarly databases.

Search terms used were musician health promotion; musician health prevention; music performance anxiety; music education health promotion; music education health prevention.

Papers found by the database search were reviewed for suitability based on their titles and abstracts. Eligible studies were studies where the primary aim included/was to investigate strategies that could promote physical and/or psychological health in musicians and are published in English language. Theoretical studies, reviews, and articles of an educational nature were also excluded.

While reviewing each article abstract, the reference lists were also reviewed, and each appropriate citation sought out based on

its title. A complete reading of articles that suit the above criteria was then carried out for a full review.

Information extracted at the full review stage were: Target population; Details of the health promotion/prevention programme/strategy; Outcome measures; Effect(s) of such programme/strategy.

Results

Of the 12 papers that satisfied the criteria for inclusion, 3 of them investigated programmes to promote physical health and prevent injuries, while 9 investigated various strategies for reducing music performance anxiety to enhance musical performance.

2 of the studies focussed on professional musicians, 2 of them included musicians of all levels of expertise, while the other 8 studies targeted student musicians.

An abstract of the respective information extracted from each study is shown in the table below (Table 1).

Discussion

Due to the novelty of this field of study, articles that could be reviewed was limited. Nevertheless, there are some learning points from the information gathered from the selected articles.

Most of the studies targeting professional musicians aim to develop relevant exercise regimes to improve the physical health of these musicians and prevent injuries arising from the physical strains of instrument-playing. In comparison, studies targeting student musicians try to investigate ways in which to reduce music performance anxiety and improve their psychological wellbeing in preparation for the working society. This can be attributed to studies that have shown that anxiety affects professional musicians to a lesser extent compared to student musicians, hence the emphasis on early intervention in terms of psychological health management.

The outcome measures that are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention programmes also vary greatly, making it difficult to compare between interventions. It would be helpful for future studies to standardise the outcome measures where possible, so as to facilitate comparisons to evaluate the applicability of the programmes to different contexts.

Table 1: Abstract of extracted information from eligible studies

Authors	Osborne, M.S., Kenny, D.T., Cooksey, J. (2007).
Target population	9 boys and 14 girls, students who scored within the top 25% of scores on the Music Performance Anxiety Inventory for Adolescents (MPAI-A). Mean age: 13.87 years.
Details of programme/strategy	Cognitive-behavioural intervention group (MPEP) vs. Behaviour-exposure-only control group (BEO).
Outcome measures	Music Performance Anxiety Inventory - Adolescents (MPAI-A) Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule for DSM-IV: Child Interview Schedule (ADIS-IV:C) State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) Parental Expectancy Scale (PES) Heart rate (beats per minute, BPM) and frontalis muscle movements (microvolts, μV) Evaluation of performance quality of recordings by judges
Effect(s)	Participation in the program significantly improved self-report of MPA for adherent students MPEP group also self-reported significantly less performance avoidance than the BEO group. No discernible improvement in overall performance quality

(ONG Wei Ling, TAKENAKA Koji)