

Prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among instrumental musicians at a Center for Performing arts in South Africa

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Abstract

The prevalence of playing-related musculoskeletal disorders (PRMD) is high in various countries of the world, but there is a paucity of literature in Africa. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of PRMDs among instrumentalists in South Africa, with specific objectives in determining the distribution, symptoms, and pain severity. The self-administered Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire was used to collect information from the participants regarding the lifetime and current prevalence and the distribution of PRMD symptoms. A visual analog scale was used to collect information on the severity of pain, while the questionnaire designed by Blackie, Stone, and Tiernan (1999) was used to collect information on the symptoms of the PRMDs. Twenty participants took part in this study, and the respondents reported a lifetime prevalence (over a period of 12 months) of PRMDs as 14 out of 17 and the current prevalence (in the last 7 days) as 4. Pain severity was mostly mild, and the most affected region was in the upper extremities, with the shoulders being the most affected. Tightening and soreness were the most reported symptom of PRMDs. The prevalence of PRMDs among this population was high, although severity was mild, with the upper extremities being the most affected area. *Med Probl Perform Art* 2013; 28(2): 96–99.

Musculoskeletal disorders peculiar to instrumentalists have been found to be prevalent in various continents^{1,2} in the world. These disorders are usually diagnosed as cumulative trauma disorders or repetitive strain injuries.^{3,4} However, it is of note that the presence of these disorders affects the performance and playing of musical instruments.⁵ Tingling, pain, and loss of function have all been identified as symptoms of PRMDs,⁶ although pain is usually the most common complaint.⁷ The type of instrument played is a risk factor for injury; various studies have shown different results regarding piano versus string instruments.^{8,9}

It is worthy to note that with all the research emanating from this discipline, little or nothing is recorded from Africa. The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence, pattern, distribution, and severity of PRMDs among instrumental musicians at a Center for Performing Arts in South Africa.

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