



Meeting in the middle

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Why are we here?

- OT and PT:
Interested in how people do things
Quality of life issues
- Where possible - prevent problems
- Reduce or eliminate disability/pain caused by problems
- Two perspectives on playing music
- Work together for better outcomes by
- Meeting in the middle!



PRMDs

- Playing-related musculoskeletal disorders
- Put simply: problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints that are related to playing a musical instrument
- Anyone know of a musician with PRMDs?

Research: What do we know... and does it apply to trad musicians?

What do we know?

- Musicians (performers, teachers and students)
- Mainly classical musicians (violin, woodwind and piano)
- Problems (PRMDs) in adult musicians
 - 39 – 87% (classical musicians) (Zaza, 1997),
 - 26 – 93% (piano) (Bragge et al 2005).
- PRMDs in students
 - 34 – 62% (Zaza, 1997),
 - 84-87% (violin, woodwind, keyboard) (Brandfonbrener, 2009)
 - up to 100% for percussion (Brandfonbrener, 2009)

What kind of problems?

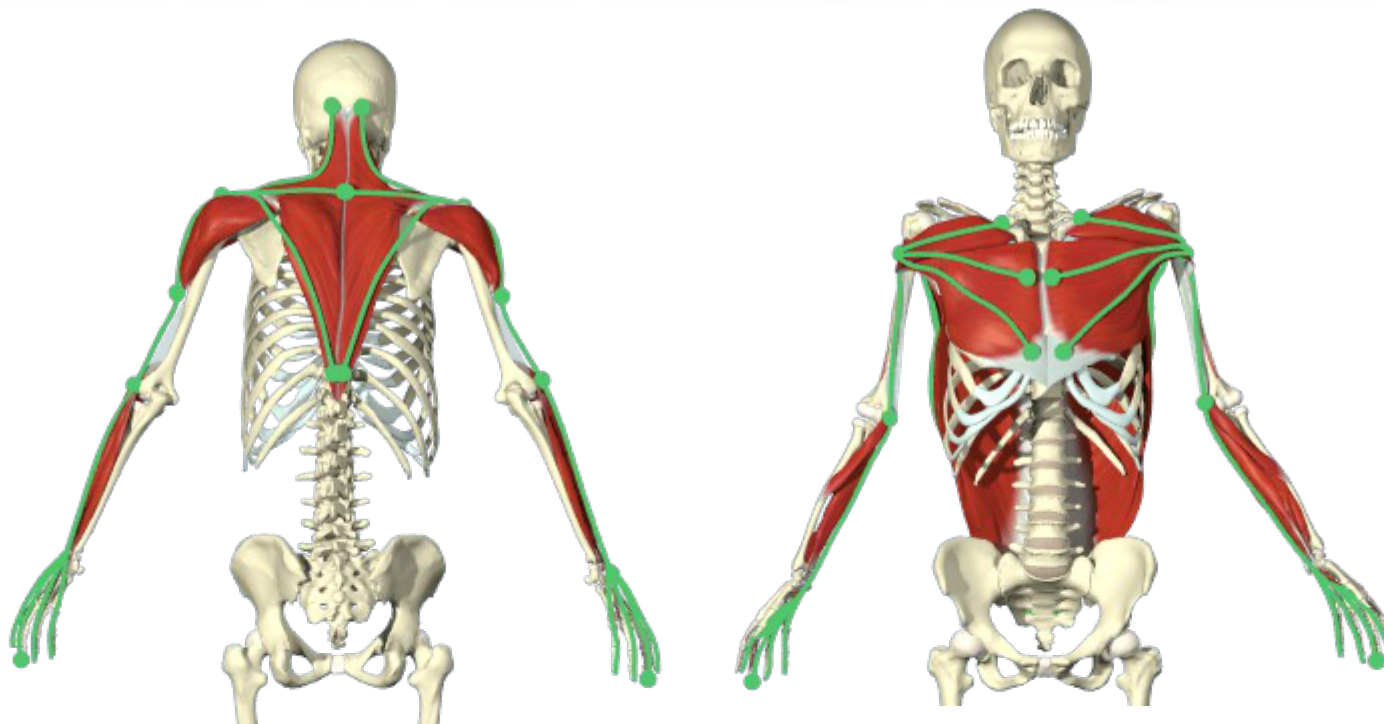
- Mainly shoulders, arms and hands, but also backs and necks
- Often more than one problem
- ***‘Pain, weakness, lack of control, numbness, tingling, or other symptoms that interfere with your ability to play your instrument at the level you are accustomed to’*** (Zaza et al, 1998)

Does it apply to trad musicians?

- Yes!
- Focus group studies in University of Ulster, Magee and University of Limerick
- All participants were/are trad musicians (fiddle, piano, flute, concertina, button accordion, guitar, bodhrán, banjo and tin whistle)
- Many played more than one instrument
- Many played (incl. sessions) and taught students

PRMDs and trad musicians

- Problems of trad musicians matched problems in research papers
- Different instruments are associated with different problems
- Our conclusion: trad players, as well as other musicians are at risk of PRMDs



Anatomy trains *Primal Pictures* ©



Caution...

- Just because there are common factors between trad musicians and other musicians...
the solution is **NOT** a 'One-size-fits-all'
- Look at individual needs: technique, type of music, environment, performance, general health and other demands on the person (financial, family...)
- We need to learn a lot more in order to give **better** and **more helpful** advice and treatment to musicians.

Perceptions of musicians

- Health professionals don't know about musicians
- Health professionals may do some harm
- Many musicians believe it is better to leave things alone rather than risk making the problem worse
- Might have to stop playing (months/for good)
- Might not get work if it is known that there's a problem
- **We agree!**
- How can we move forward?

Musicians in a different context...



- Specific muscle work/precision
- High repetition
- A lot of practice
(teaching brain and muscles to coordinate so the whole task is automatic)
- Competition...often
- Performance at the **right** time,
to the **right** level
- Stress/pressure of performance

What do these people have in common?

Risk factors

- Previous injury
- Long hours and altered sleep cycle
- Lack of breaks
- Environment (prolonged sitting, type of seating, available space, etc....)
- Stress
- Type of instrument
- Posture
- Ignoring pain



- Rest: **Does not always mean stopping**. Often means pacing and playing for a shorter time or with longer breaks.
- GP: medication (reduce pain etc. in the short term)
- Physiotherapist:
 - reduce pain, give specific exercise to strengthen weak muscles and improve muscle control
 - Help correct muscle imbalance (one set of muscles working too hard etc.)
 - Often small change in one joint can make big changes elsewhere
- Occupational therapist: help improve function by adapting task and/or environment for optimal performance
- Acupuncturist: settle pain and improve energy levels
- Osteopath/chiropractor: settle pain and help posture

Where to get help

- Yourself – be aware of limitations and patterns
- Fellow musicians – what/who helped them?
- Health professionals **who specialise in musculoskeletal problems**

Sports physiotherapists (specialists in muscle function and the individual)

Occupational health professionals with experience in repetitive strain injury (RSI)

**ASK ABOUT THEIR EXPERTISE
BEFORE YOU ATTEND**

Meeting in the middle



- How can the health professionals better understand musicians and their playing-related problems?
- How can musicians access appropriate help and support to reduce injury?
- How can we meet in the middle?



Any questions?



**How can we
MEET IN THE MIDDLE?**

Open floor discussion