



Safe Trad Think Tank

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8 May 2015

Why are we here?



- Physiotherapists:
 - Interested in how people do things
 - Quality of life issues
- Where possible - prevent problems
- Reduce or eliminate disability/pain caused by problems
- Work together (therapists, musicians, other health care professionals and supporting bodies) for better outcomes by...
- This **Safe Trad Think Tank** Consensus meeting!



PRMDs

- Playing-related musculoskeletal disorders (PRMDs)
- Put simply: problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints that are related to playing a musical instrument

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)

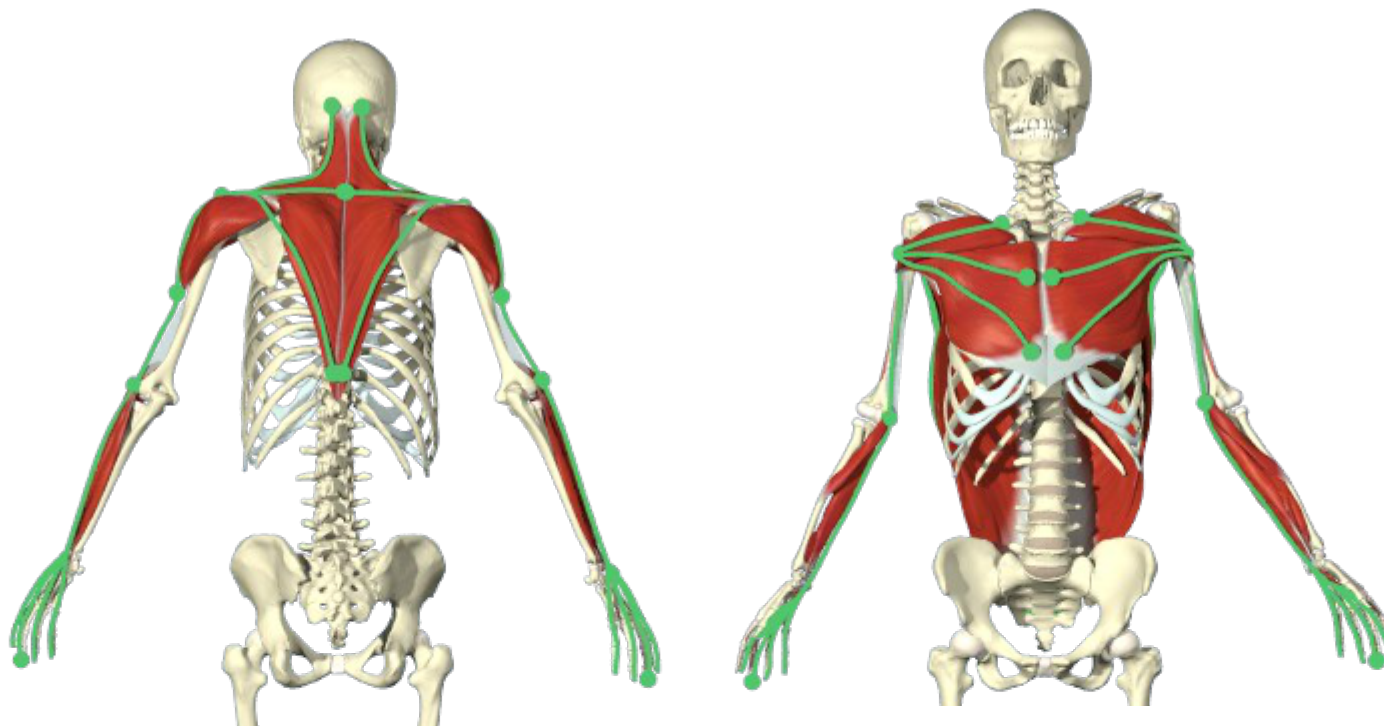
Does it apply to other musicians?

- Yes!
- Focus group studies at Ulster University, 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

Unpublished findings (Mark Porter)

- Survey of trad musicians (n = 79, 72% response rate)
- Mean age = 35.3years \pm 12.5 (range 16 – 65)
 - Prevalence and age? Not significant
- Gender:
 - male = 41.8% (n = 33), female = 58.2% (n = 46)
 - Prevalence and gender? Not significant
- PRMDs: 77.8% of respondents (n = 56) and as a result...
 - 44.4% (n = 24) had to make a permanent change
 - 22.2% (n = 12) made a temporary change

- Total hours playing per week:
- Normal week:
 - 10.52 ± 9.26 (main instrument)
 - 6.65 ± 6.19 (additional instrument)
- Busy week: 19.96 ± 17.06 (main instrument)
- Prevalence and normal week = not significant
- **Prevalence and busy week = significant association ($p = 0.002$)**



Anatomy trains *Primal Pictures* ©



Caution...

- Just because there are common factors between musicians and their injuries...
 - 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 health professionals by musicians from recent focus group research (Wilson et al, 2013)

- 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
- How can we move forward?

Musicians in a different
context...



- Specific muscle work/precision
- High repetition during activity
- 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



A large cable-stayed bridge is under construction in a mountainous area. Two concrete bridge piers are visible, each with a large concrete girder being lowered into place. The bridge is set against a backdrop of rugged, brown mountains. In the foreground, a road with a white van is visible, and a concrete bridge deck is partially shown on the right.

**How can we
(musicians, health professionals
and supporting bodies)
reduce and prevent injury in
trad musicians?**