

Music—Movement—Mood

The PAMA Regional Meeting, Toronto, February 2014

This year's PAMA regional meeting in Toronto was another excellent event covering a diverse range of subjects and artistic disciplines whilst highlighting the common themes which are applicable to all these topics. Once again, it took place in the beautiful Royal Conservatory of Music, bringing PAMA right into the heart of this wonderful musical establishment. High on the agenda were presentations from Ralph Manchester, MD (delivered in his absence by Christie Guptill, PhD) and Marijeanne Liederbach, PhD, who both showed the great progress being made toward finding tools to define, quantify, and measure injuries and injury risk in performers and to develop screening and training guidance in accordance with healthy practice—no mean feat! We can see how the body of performing arts medicine research is now growing strongly with practical application being more firmly at the forefront.

By popular demand, there was a greater representation for vocal issues in this year's programme, beginning with an excellent primer on medical problems for vocalists by Susan Arjmand, MD—a great introduction for those unfamiliar with this field. This was followed by a workshop by Linda Brennan, PhD, from the American Academy of Dramatic Art, an interactive session exploring vocal warm-up routines for actors and how to shape and find the different sounds which form the basis of developing accents and dialects. I also gave a workshop on the integration of voice and dance technique for triple threat performers in musical theatre with the aid of a wonderful student from the nearby Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts, Jean-Francois Soucy, who bravely volunteered to be coached in front of an audience! He sang "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables" from *Les Miserables*, ably accompanied on piano by Meiyen Lee.

Two further excellent topics were presented relating to sleep disorders and nutrition for performers, subjects which are vital to the underlying health of any performer. Anna Maria Borowska, MD, gave a comprehensive overview of the symptoms and treatments of sleep disor-

ders in performers as well as some invaluable advice on achieving optimal sleeping habits. Aileen Burford-Mason, PhD, an orthomolecular nutritionist and author of *Eat Well, Age Better*, gave an excellent presentation on the care of the human voice from a nutritional standpoint. She synthesised the very complex underlying biochemistry into a "digestible" form and explained how a good nutritional understanding can help performers to give them energy when needed and to slow them down when the time comes to rest and sleep, through eating appropriate foods at the right time of day. She also exploded some of the myths surrounding supplementation and argued in favour of vitamin C supplements (a favourite of many of the vocalists with whom I work), but warned that these are only useful if taken in time-release capsule form due to their half-life in the body. She also emphasised the need for good protein intake for the production of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is involved in movement, speech control and vocalisation as well as helping to control emotional responses. However, she stressed that this must be on a meal-by-meal basis as dopamine is rapidly used up, particularly in times of stress, and is also depleted by physical and vocal performance.

One of the highlights of the conference was the artists' panel discussion which took place at the end of the first day. Seven performers from various fields of the arts very generously shared their personal journeys with injury and illness, giving an invaluable insight into both the physical and emotional ramifications of being forced to take time away from their crafts. Of particular note were the stories of Larry Guzik, a graphic designer and accomplished guitarist, and Thomas Wade, a seven-time CCMA award-winning singer. Larry suffered two debilitating strokes at the age of 40 which left him with very limited function and a poor prognosis for recovery. Determined not to be beaten, he developed a strong interest in neuroscience and worked hard on rebuilding his damaged brain. In spite of very poor prognoses, these two artists used sheer determination and a deep exploration of themselves to find their way back to health. They both provide a ringing endorsement for the power of neuroplasticity and the ability of the body to recover and repair. As an audience, we were all humbled by the incredibly frank accounts of deeply personal issues which were shared by the whole panel and it was a great demonstration of how vital it is to have per-

On 8–9 February, 2014, PAMA, in conjunction with the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music, held the Fourth Annual Toronto Regional Meeting of PAMA. Course Directors were John Chong, MD, and Bonnie Robson, MD.



The Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College Choir.



Susan Czyzo directing the pilates workshop.

forming arts medicine specialists to be able to provide appropriate, targeted support our performing artists.

Other notable contributions were by Phillip J. McAllister, who gave a presentation on myo-neural medicine for performing arts; Craig Jacobs, who shared the results of his international cross-sectional study of musculoskeletal injury in professional dancers; Linda Brennan, who talked about stage fright in actors; Julie Kirchen, who described the wellness program for the performers at the Disney Parks and Resorts and included a contribution from the Disney Cruise Lines team whose rehearsal studios are based in Toronto. The workshops included Dr. John Chong's work on biofeedback for musicians, Gyrokinesis Movement by Janet Johnson, self-esteem for the artist by Ruth Bittorf and Dr. Anita Shack, hearing conservation in music schools by Marshall Chasin, and pilates with Susan Czyzo.

The final day was wrapped up by a lovely recital by the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College Choir who performed a medley of Bruno Mars' songs. It was great to have these young students at the conference and to open their eyes to the world of performing arts medicine. I chatted to a couple of them who told me that, prior to this conference, they were completely unaware that the world of PAM existed and that they were so excited to find a place where their dual passions for healthcare and the arts could truly meet and blend. I also heard similar reactions from a small group of performing arts students from the Randolph Academy, which makes me think how important it is to bring

students from both medicine and the arts together to show them what we do and what the possibilities are. That way, we can begin to produce a new generation of both performers who understand more about their health and healthcare providers who understand more about performers.

There were also plenty of networking opportunities between healthcare practitioners, teachers, performers, and students, including a great meal with live music at the Jazz Bistro in central Toronto. These meetings are so important for the sharing of ideas and information and for promoting discussions between all the different professions involved in the care of performers. Bonnie Robson, John Chong, and their team once again provided an excellent programme and a wonderfully warm welcome to a rather chilly Toronto, which excited all of us who attended into action to further the cause of performing arts medicine. I look forward to next year!

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