Meetings

Nordic Dedication to Musicians’ Health and Performance
A Successful Launch of the First Nordic Conference

Ulrik Röijezon, PT, PhD, Lars Nyberg, PT, PhD, and Helene M. Paarup, MD, PhD

Within the last 30 years performing arts medicine has grown internationally as a scientific and clinical specialty for investigation, examination, treatment, and prevention of disorders among performing arts professionals and amateurs, i.e., dancers, singers, musicians, actors, and others engaged in performing arts.¹² In the Nordic countries, clinical specialization and research regarding the health situation of musicians and other performing artists has been relatively sparse. However, this has gained speed in the last decade and is today a growing field.

NORDIC CLINICS FOR PERFORMING ARTS MEDICINE

Private and public outpatient clinics for performing arts medicine have emerged in many countries around the world, including the Nordic countries.³⁴ In Sweden, a national network of multidisciplinary occupational health services for performing artists has been initiated by the Clinic for Artists' and Musicians' Health, the Artist- och Musikerhälsan in Malmö. The clinic offers a wide range of services related to playing-related health problems including musculoskeletal disorders, audiologic problems, and different psychological aspects, such as anxiety, stage fright, and depression.³

In Denmark, the Clinic for Performing Arts Medicine, opened to the public in June 2013. The clinic primarily specializes in musicians’ health and work, and being a clinic at the Odense University Hospital, it is a fully publicly driven clinic with all outpatient visits provided free of charge to the patients.⁵ Being part of Odense University Hospital furthermore requires that this clinic is research-based.³ In Finland a wide network is established to provide health services to musicians, including a wide range of health care services to the music students at the Sibelius Academy.⁶ In Norway, there is quite an interest among health care professionals and musicians in establishing a public clinic in line with the Danish Clinic for Performing Arts Medicine. A Norwegian group therefore has been introduced to the Danish work, including the research unit, clinic, and the necessary aspiration for keeping a strong network with interest groups.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN PERFORMING ARTS MEDICINE

More recently, performing arts medicine has found its way into university education in some countries, as for example with a Master of Science in Performing Arts' Medicine being offered in London.⁷ Looking at the Nordic countries, courses are given for medical doctors in Finland, and there are also annual seminars in music medicine for collaboration between medical professions and musicians.⁶ Yet, there is a much larger potential for research-based education and evidence-based clinical knowledge sharing in performing arts medicine.

As a way to overcome this, to encourage the development of clinical specialization and research within performing arts medicine, and to ensure focus on a wide perspective of current knowledge and new trends in the field, Nordic clinicians and researchers have worked towards launching a recurring conference in performing arts medicine. As the Nordic research has evolved, in particular regarding classical musicians, with musculoskeletal, psychosocial, and audiologic disorders, and the health situation among music teachers, the main focus of the new conference is musicians’ health and performance.⁸⁻¹⁶

THE FIRST NORDIC CONFERENCE

Musicians’ Health and Performance 1st Nordic Conference 2013 took place June 13–14, 2013, at the Acusticum Concert Hall in Piteå in the northern part of Sweden, close to the Arctic circle. The Acusticum is one of the most modern concert halls in Northern Europe, and is famous for its acoustics and its new, top modern, and 10-meter-wide organ with 9,000 pipes and 208 stops.¹⁷ The Acusticum is located next to the Music Conservatory at the Luleå University of Technology. The main organizers were from the

---

Drs. Röijezon and Nyberg are with the Department of Health Sciences, Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden, and Dr. Paarup is with the Research Unit for Occupational & Environmental Medicine, Clinical Institute, University of Southern Denmark, and the Department of Neurology, Odense University Hospital, Odense, Denmark

Address correspondence to: Dr. Röijezon at ulrik.roijezon@ltu.se.

https://doi.org/10.21091/mppa.2014.4048
Luleå University of Technology, and the conference committees included researchers and clinicians from eight different universities and health clinics in Sweden and Denmark.

The aims of the conference were:

1. Creating a forum for researchers, clinicians, and musicians with special interests in various aspects of musicians’ health and performance to share their knowledge and ideas and to promote further research, development, and collaborations within this area.

2. Knowledge sharing done formally by scientific keynotes and shorter scientific oral and poster presentations and with clinical oral presentations and workshops, and informally through international networking between participants from the different participant groups (researchers, clinicians, musicians, music teachers). Abstracts should be peer-reviewed and published in a conference book.

3. Covering a broad field of topics of relevance to musicians’ health and performance, including musculoskeletal disorders, stress, hearing problems, neurology, prevention, and treatment of playing-related disorders as well as general health promotion and performance.

More than 60 participants from nine countries and three continents attended the conference. Participants were mainly researchers and clinicians but also included musicians, music teachers, and orchestra leaders. The conference had two tracks, including both scientific and clinical presentations and workshops. Topics were musculoskeletal pain, motor control and learning, hypermobility, embouchure, hearing disorders, stress, mental and physical training, prevention, and rehabilitation methods. Three prominent researchers were keynote-speakers and they shed light on various aspects of musicians’ health and performance; Dr. Bronwen Ackermann, of the University of Sydney, Australia, gave a highly appreciated overview of musicians’ health in the past, present, and future. Professor Karen Søgaard, of the University of Southern Denmark, enlightened the audience on risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders among musicians and gave research-based suggestions for prevention. Professor Fredrik Uhlén, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, gave an inspiring presentation on the brain of the musician.

Representatives from the Finnish, Danish, and Swedish health care systems gave an update on their clinical perspectives and on-going developments of specialized health clinics in performing arts medicine. The closing of the conference included a challenging and inspiring panel discussion on future directions for research, clinical specialization, and occupational health services for musicians.

Time was also scheduled for discussions and networking among participants, with rather large periods for coffee breaks, a networking reception, and a conference dinner. Both days’ music was performed by The Chrystal Quartet, a string quartet whose members graduated from the music conservatory in Piteå. The music repertoire spanned from classical via traditional folk to popular music, including novel classical music composed locally especially for the quartet. At times, the musicians were connected to an online 3D motion capture system to visualize the complex movements involved in their music performance.

The complete conference program including abstracts can be seen at the conference homepage. A special delight for many of the delegates was the light summer nights of Piteå, which with its location only 150 km south from the Arctic circle gave a touch of the midnight sun.

OUTCOMES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

From the organizers’ point of view, the conference was a great success with all aims fulfilled. The participants counted international researchers, clinicians, and musicians, as well as music teachers and orchestra leaders. The aim of a broad range of topics was successfully fulfilled with enlightening presentations, workshops, and discussions in an enthusiastic, creative, and friendly atmosphere. Much networking was accomplished, and researchers in the Nordic countries have initiated new collaborations involving musicians’ health and performance.

Considering the amount of new knowledge presented and the fact that most of the active Nordic researchers and specialists in performing arts medicine participated, along with most highly appreciated conference delegates from other countries, the conference served indeed as a valued forum for sharing knowledge and networking among professionals interested in musicians’ health and performance. Hopefully, this will facilitate further collaborations, research projects, and development of specialized clinics and occupational health services. Participants gave much
positive feedback about the conference, and several positive and thankful emails after the conference all indicate that the conference was appreciated by the delegates.

The positive experiences from the first conference indicate prospects for further development: future visions include establishing an interacting network of Nordic researchers, initiating a Nordic medical association for performing arts medicine, and establishing specialized education on medical problems of performing artists for health professionals.

NEXT CONFERENCE IN JUNE 2015 IN DENMARK

That the Nordic collaborations will continue is a definite. The conference has strengthened the researchers’ and clinicians’ contacts and has emphasized the musicians’, researchers’, and the clinicians’ common genuine interest in continuing the work within performing arts medicine. At the closing session of the 1st conference, we had the great pleasure to announce that the 2nd conference is already planned. To emphasize that the conference is open to an international audience and not only Nordic participants, the next conference is entitled Musicians’ Health and Performance 2nd Conference 2015 and is held in Odense, Denmark, June 10–12, 2015.

As a new feature, the Musicians’ Health and Performance 2nd Conference 2015 will also be open to other perspectives of performing arts medicine, although musicians’ health and performance will still be the main focus. Keynotes, scientific and clinical abstracts, and short oral presentations, posters, workshops in psychology, physiotherapy, and Alexander technique, as well as health tests, and planned networking will be part of the program. The Musicians’ Health and Performance 2nd Conference 2015 will be held during celebrations of the 150th anniversary for the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, who was born south of Odense. More information about the Musicians’ Health and Performance 2nd Conference 2015 can be found at www.mhpc2015.dk.

The following people contributed in the conference committees 2013: From Sweden: Conference Chair Ulrik Röijezon, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Health Sciences, Luleå University of Technology, Meit Levin, Conference Coordinator, Luleå University of Technology. Lars Nyberg, Professor, Dept. of Health Sciences, Luleå University of Technology, Ulrika Lindström Längberg, PhD student, Dept. of Health Sciences, Luleå University of Technology, Teresa Nyman, PhD, Karolinska Institutet and Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. Svend Erik Mathiassen, Professor, Dept. of Occupational and Public Health, Centre for Musculoskeletal Research, University of Gävle. Annbritt Helena Björjesson, Associate Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine and Rehabilitation, Umeå University. Helena Börjesson, Betania FHV, Stockholm. From Denmark: Karen Sogaard, Professor, Inst. of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics, University of Southern Denmark. Birgit Juul-Kristensen, Associate Professor, Inst. of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics, University of Southern Denmark. Helene M. Paarup, MD, PhD, Dept. of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, Odense University Hospital. Lotte Nygaard Andersen, PhD student, Inst. of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics, University of Southern Denmark.

Special thanks to our sponsors and collaborators with whom we share this important interest in musicians’ health and performance: Swedish Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte); the musicians’ trade union confederations Musikerförbundet and Steriges yrkesmusikerförbund (SYMf); County Council of Norrbotten; Municipality of Piteå; and Qualisys AB.

REFERENCES


December 2014  245