The Evidence for Dancer Wellness Programs

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Objectives

➔ Explain the unique occupational stresses of dance-work environments.
➔ Identify the key components of a dancer wellness health program.
➔ Describe the benefits of a prevention approach to reduce dance-related injury and illness.
What is the work Environment
Dance Profession
Criteria at the Artist Health Centre

1. I am a member (or have an agent representative) of a professional and/or union organization appropriate to my artistic activity.

2. I receive professional compensation for my artistic work

3. I have received public or peer recognition in the form of honours, awards, and professional prizes or publicly distributed critical appraisal of my artistic work within the past five years.
Occupational Stresses

- Performance Paradox
- Shift Work
- Travel
- Physically Demanding
- Psychologically Demanding
- Career Opportunities
- Unions, Benefits and Insurance
Injury

Personal, economical, psychological, and physical factors increase a ballet dancer's stress, which can result in a higher risk for injuries.

The constant fear of injuries is universal among dancers because injuries can lead to permanent disability and the end of their ballet career.

Psychological Stress

The results revealed that male dancers demonstrated significantly more negative personality traits and psychological distress than female dancers or men in the general population.

In addition, physical stress and personality traits, characteristic of the "overachiever," distinguished injured dancers

Personality, stress, and injuries in professional ballet dancers
Hamilton LH, Hamilton WG, Meltzer JD, Marshall P, Molnar M.
Overall, results indicated that dancers may not differentiate between performance pain and injury pain, or modify their appraisal and coping strategies according to the characteristics of the pain experienced.

Dancing in pain: pain appraisal and coping in dancers

What do we know about Dance?

High Risk of Physical Injuries

Reality of Emotional Stress

Effect of Body Image, Pain Perception and Job Security
Wellness

Health is more than the mere absence of Disease or Injury

It is a lifestyle that encompasses physical, social and emotional well-being
Injury Surveillance

- **Swedish 5 year Study, 2001**
  - .6 injuries per 1000 hours of dance, 95% over 1 year
  - Foot and Ankle dominant in Female dancers
  - Knee injuries in Male Dancers often traumatic
  - Overuse was identified as key factor F>M
  - Average time off was 2.3 weeks
Injury Surveillance

- Norwegian National Ballet 2002
  - 19 week period, 75% of respondents reported an injury
  - Soft Tissue, Foot and Ankle
  - 22% were acute, 75% overuse, Mild-moderate
  - 16% resulted in work absence
  - Dancers believed training, scheduling were key
Fitness Training
Prevention and Peak Performance

• 1996, Sweden, Prospective Controlled Trial
  - 50% of dancers participated in a self-administered fitness training plan
  - Training group has increased O2 capacity
  - Perceived pain 1 week post Opening was less for Training Group
  - Increased psychological Coping with rehearsal
Evidence

53% foot/ankle
21.6% in the hip
16.1% in the knee
9.4% in the back

➔ Few differences were found between injured and noninjured dancers.

➔ 1 injury per 1000 hours of Dance = 1 injury per year

Injury patterns in elite preprofessional ballet dancers and the utility of screening programs to identify risk characteristics.

Gamboa JM, Roberts LA, Maring J, Fergus A.

Rationale for Dancer Health

• Injury Prevention and Detection Research
• Models of Wellness & Health Programs
• Local Experts and Resources
Benefits to the Dancer

• Interactive Process based on Dancer Experience and Dancer Input
• General Screening to determine detailed individual assessment and treatment needs
• Improved Coordination of Total Dancer Care with continued ease of access
• Development of Assessment Tool based on Company Needs
Results of Monitoring and Evaluation

- Decrease in Work-related Injuries by 24%
- Decrease in Dancer disability by 46%
- Decrease perceived Stress in Dancers
- Increased their work schedule hours by 10%
- Increased voluntary participation of full company
Stress-o-meter

![Bar chart showing stress levels in different categories: + Stress, Warning, Speed Limit, Distress. Each category has three bars representing Emotions, Energy, and Performance.]
Benefits of Wellness

- Increased stamina and endurance
- Improved Sleep and Recovery
- Enhanced Positive Attitude
- Increased adaptation skills
- Reduced Stress Symptoms
DANCE USA TASK FORCE

• July 2005, New York City
  – Guidelines on Standardized Health Screening
  – Health care professionals who work within Dance Company settings

“The privacy, confidentiality and trust of the dancers were of paramount importance in exploring strategies to prevent injury and illness in the company setting.”
National Ballet of Canada

- Presentation to Dancers
- Communications Committee
- Visit with Expert
- Yearly Voluntary reinforcement
- Educational Approach
  - Newsletter
  - Sessions
Definition of Screening

- Company wide
- Not related to hiring/de-hiring policies
- Implementation within Season and during company time
- Total health including orthopaedic, fitness, emotional and lifestyle
- Emphasis on early intervention and prevention
Privacy Policy

- FIPPA
  - Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
    - Health Information Protection Act
- CPSO & Health Regulations Act
  - Confidentiality and Privacy Requirements
- The National Ballet Company
  - Agrees to respect the privacy of all dancer information
National Ballet of Canada
Dancer Wellness Program

1. Dancer Wellness Committee
2. Maintain Key Services
   • Event Coverage
   • On-site Rehab Services
   • Quick Medical Access of Experts
   • Company Education Sessions
3. Confidential Health Screening Questionnaire
4. Personal Recommendations for Performance Enhancement
5. Implementation of Conditioning Screening
Questionnaire Overview

1) Screening Approach:
   • General Health
   • Lifestyle & Training
   • Orthopaedic

2) Recommendations for Individual Detailed Assessment and Service Options

3) Detailed Conditioning Assessment

4) Educational Nutritional Support
Trends

• 90% Interested in Fitness, Conditioning and Injury Prevention
• 42 % Interested in Nutrition for Performance
• 37.5% Interested in Counselling for Emotional Wellness, Stress management or Performance Anxiety
• 5% Smoking Cessation
Services to Dancers

- Wellness and Health Assessment
- Orthopaedic Evaluation and Treatment
- Rehabilitation Assessment and Treatment
- Nutritional Assessment and Counseling
- Psychological Counseling
- Fitness and Conditioning Programs
Role Modeling from other Companies

- Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre
- Houston Ballet
- New York City Ballet
- Pittsburg Ballet
- Boston Ballet
- Case Western Program
Summary of Dance Company Experience

1. Documented benefit to Dancer Health Programs
2. All Programs are confidential, comprehensive and customized.
3. Cost and time are the biggest barriers.
Lessons for Implementation

1. Needs Survey
2. Communication Strategy including teachers and coaches
3. Designate a time and place for group assessment
4. Provide Individual immediate feedback
5. Share Results as Composite
6. Reinforce through the Season
Next Steps

• Recovery Strategies
• Effective Communication
• Interpersonal Team Development
• Early Detection – Early Intervention
The one important thing I have learnt over the years is the difference between taking one's work seriously and taking oneself seriously. The first is imperative and the second disastrous.

--Margot Fonteyn

Dancers are the Athletes of God
Albert Einstein
Questions