

A Health Course for Music Students: Design, Implementation and Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Background

The Health Promotion in Schools of Music (HPSM) project has recommended the implementation of undergraduate health courses for music majors (Chesky, Dawson, & Manchester, 2006). Few such courses have been evaluated to date. On this basis, a health promotion module was designed and implemented at the Royal Northern College of Music, in Manchester.

Aims

To design, run and evaluate a health and wellbeing module for first-year students, as part of their core curriculum, lasting six months, starting from October 2016.

Method

A health and wellbeing module was designed based on a critical appraisal of the literature, consideration of HPSM recommendations and the availability of staff members and preparation. Lectures and seminars covered a range of topics, including tools for better practice and time management, information on musicians' health and wellbeing, anatomy, hearing loss and music performance anxiety (MPA). Self-report data on a variety of health-related issues, behaviours and attitudes were gathered, both before (T1) and after the module was delivered (T2). Quantitative data were analysed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at T2.

Results

Although positive affect was lower at T2 than T1 ($Z = -3.434$, $p < 0.001$), causal inferences cannot be made. Improved scores were found for perceived knowledge of effective practising strategies ($Z = -4.325$, $p < .001$); effective rehearsal strategies ($Z = -3.842$, $p < .001$); learning and memorizing strategies ($Z = -2.649$, $p < .01$); ergonomics and posture ($Z = -2.450$, $p = .014$); MPA ($Z = -4.972$, $p < .001$); behaviour change techniques ($Z = -3.671$, $p < .001$); resources for healthy music-making ($Z = -4.520$, $p < .001$); sound intensity levels associated with hearing loss ($Z = -2.090$, $p < .01$); and awareness of risk factors for performance-related musculoskeletal disorders (PRMDs) ($Z = -3.091$, $p < .01$). Thematic analysis of interview data is underway.

Conclusions

Increases in perceived knowledge and awareness of some relevant health-related topics were noted at T2. However, a

control group or another comparable intervention is needed to infer causality.

Keywords

health promotion course, behaviour change, music students

REFERENCES

- Chesky, K.S., Dawson, W.J., & Manchester, R. (2006). Health promotion in schools of music: Initial recommendations for schools of music. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, 21, 142-144.