

Epidemiology of musician's dystonia: Experience from the London clinic, 2002-07

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Musician's dystonia is a movement disorder presenting as incoordination, involving single or several fingers. The symptoms are either highly task-specific and occur only during playing, or involve other fine motor tasks, such as writing. It is unclear whether there are epidemiological differences between highly task-specific and the non task-specific form of musician's dystonia, which may indicate a different pathophysiology. We review epidemiological data of 124 musician's dystonia patients (86 male/38 female) seen in London during 2002-07. We compare the variables gender, age at symptom onset, professional position, instrument, and music style in highly task-specific (n=83) and non task-specific cases (n=41). The results strongly suggest a difference in the epidemiology. The *task-specific* form shows distinctive features, such as a significantly earlier onset, relative specificity for practice-intensive instruments (keyboard, plucked string) and predominance for classical musicians. The *non-task-specific* cases appear to be more similar to other forms of focal hand dystonia, such as writer's cramp. We suggest that the amount and intensity of musical training may be a crucial pathophysiological factor in the task-specific form of musician's dystonia but is less important in the non task-specific form.

Keywords: musician's dystonia; epidemiology; pathophysiology

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