PHYSICAL THERAPY REHABILITATION STRATEGIES FOR DANCERS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Study Design: Qualitative design utilizing a phenomenological approach

Objective: To determine what rehabilitation strategies physical therapists used with dancers, and to discuss techniques and strategies for implementation of relative rest from both the dancer and the physical therapist perspective.

Background: Based on the abundance of musculoskeletal injuries in dance communities, skilled services for differential diagnosis and treatment, as well as an explanation of consequences for compliance and non-compliance with prescribed therapeutic interventions are crucial. Dancers often delay seeking treatment for their injuries because they feel medical professionals lack sufficient knowledge regarding dance injuries. While various methods and techniques are implemented to promote relative rest, dancers generally report that they are more willing to alter techniques in the short term but not long term, and would rather decrease their dance intensity levels than the frequency of practice.

Methods and Measures: Qualitative approach implemented through analysis and interpretation of self-administered questionnaires sent via email to dancers and therapists. Purposeful sampling was done through use of a criterion sampling method, requiring participants to have experienced dancer rehabilitation. Data was correlated to find a common thread of strategies for rehabilitation and to encourage modification of current approaches.

Results: Physical therapists returned 29 surveys and five dominant themes prevailed throughout. They were in the areas of 1) evaluation, 2) dance modification, 3) intervention, 4) patient education, and 5) communication. Only eight surveys were returned by dancers; however similar concepts and rehabilitation strategies were described. Quotes were identified from the questionnaires that best represented the five themes.

Conclusions: This study was important in examining and documenting which rehabilitation techniques therapists found successful in physical therapy, and what strategies were used to implement relative rest during rehabilitation. Successful approach strategies of physical therapists involved: ongoing evaluation including dance technique and performance, dance-centered movement modification that is clearly defined to the dancer, and an understanding of dance requirements and dance lingo.

Recommended Readings