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Concussion Knowledge and Prior Concussion Experience of Theater Personnel

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BACKGROUND

Concussion is a neurometabolic brain injury that is well publicized in sports. Performing artists are at risk for concussion, but do not always have access to specialized healthcare to manage this injury. Many on-stage and backstage activities, obstacles, and hazards place actors and production workers at risk of concussion.

OBJECTIVE

The purposes of this study were to determine the knowledge and attitudes of theater personnel regarding concussion and concussion risks and to assess previous experiences with concussion in this population.

DESIGN

Descriptive research study

PARTICIPANTS

University theater departments and professional theater companies.

METHODS

An online survey was sent to members of university theater departments and professional theater companies. Respondents were asked to identify concussion symptoms from a list of correct and incorrect symptoms and to share their attitudes regarding concussion by completing sentences about sustaining and reporting this injury. Participants then selected mechanisms of sustaining a concussion from a list of correct and incorrect choices. Finally, respondents who indicated they had suffered one or more concussions during theater activity

answered questions regarding mechanism of injury, symptoms experienced, whether they reported the injury, and, if so, to whom.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Knowledge of concussion mechanisms, signs, and symptoms, history of concussion incidence and care.

RESULTS

(what data or findings you obtained)

246 participants responded to our study. Based on survey results, we believe that theater personnel have a general understanding of concussion mechanisms and symptoms and perceive the injury as serious and worthy of medical attention. Participants correctly identified 67% of the true concussion symptoms; only 21% of false concussion symptoms were identified as correct by participants. However, 72% of participants indicated they received a head impact while participating in theater activities and experienced concussion symptoms, but did not report the incident. Eighty-two percent of participants who hit their head in a theater environment were participating in an activity related to scene construction or technical elements. Twenty-eight percent of the participants who were seen by a healthcare provider and diagnosed with a concussion were not given any activity restrictions.

CONCLUSIONS and PRACTICAL RELEVANCE

Theater personnel work in environments that present risk for concussion. Safety in performing arts environments cannot be

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accomplished unless risks are identified and personnel are properly educated. This study provides insight into the extent to which theater personnel understand concussion and its risks, as well as the nature of healthcare delivered to concussed theater personnel. Concussions are prevalent in theater, however, better care for this injury is needed among theater participants.

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