

Issue 1, 2019



**SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICE**
SMART tips for
your practice

RECOVERY
Sleep for high
performance

GET FIT
How to exercise
to improve your
performance

**PERFORMANCE
HEALTHCARE**
Signs to seek
advice and tips
for talking to your
HP

the AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY for PERFORMING ARTS HEALTHCARE

HELP YOUR SHOW GO ON



STEPHEN HEATH | PHOTOGRAPHY
MNH | IG | INSTAGRAM | AIPP



ASPAH

Australian Society for
Performing Arts Healthcare

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For more information, contact:

E: admin@aspah.org.au

W: www.aspah.org.au

'Help Your Show Go On' is an initiative of ASPAH designed to bring key concepts of healthy practice to performing artists in Australia. This booklet is intended as an educational resource only and is not intended to replace the specific advice of a healthcare professional. ASPAH always recommends seeking the advice of a qualified healthcare professional in the case of injury, illness, or if wanting specific advice for you. ASPAH recommends seeking a healthcare professional who practises in accordance with current evidence-based guidelines and patient-centred care which involves active strategies of self-management. This information was in accordance with current guidelines at the time of printing.

If you need help finding a healthcare professional, you could check out our 'accessing healthcare' guides for information on how to access your options in Australia.



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hey there, fellow artist!

Congratulations on your journey in the performing arts! We – the Australian Society for Performing Arts Healthcare – are keen to provide you with this resource booklet to help you plan for an exciting and sustainable career.

If you work in the performing arts in Australia, ASPAH is your organisation.

We are a registered charity which advocates for holistic and best practice healthcare for all in the performing arts industry. We're passionate about improving performance and health outcomes for our industry.

We understand that whilst history sometimes glorifies "suffering for our art" – a healthy artist produces great work and can enjoy life to its fullest. A sustainable and smart approach to practice optimises your ability to produce work that impacts society and brings joy to people for years to come.

We know that many health issues in the performing arts – physical and mental – are preventable, and we're here to help you prevent them. You should also know that if they do arise, we're here for you.

Our educational resources – including this booklet – are produced by leading Australian performing arts healthcare professionals. We can also help you find a healthcare professional to assist you when needed.

We hope you enjoy reading our booklet and taking advantage of the links to other resources we've provided!

- Team ASPAH



WAAPA students performing (c) WAAPA

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sustainable practice

"I have one recurring challenge in my left arm/shoulder where if I'm practising or playing too much it becomes very tense and quite sore and the nerves become irritated. It first started from going to the gym and then practising too much with bad posture and not warming up adequately beforehand. I'm still very much working on this problem by trying to remain conscious of my posture, listening to my body when it needs a break, having a massage or going to Physio, and doing exercise that develops muscles in different ways. I've found doing these things also have a double benefit in keeping me mentally fit as well!"

- Glenn Christensen, ACO violinist and ASPAH ambassador



For many performing artists, that long-awaited first contract and/or tertiary study coincides with many other firsts: living away from home; managing shopping, cooking, and laundry; balancing study, work and rest with your social life; travel and touring; managing injuries and illness; and maintaining confidence without the daily support of long-term friends and close family members. It is an exciting and challenging adventure to kick start your career!

To be where you are, you've already spent a great deal of time practising to perform at your best. Being in a tertiary program brings new challenges. Sometimes it may feel like everyone around you is more talented or working harder, and it can be tempting to think that you just need to push yourself harder to perform better. Instead, what helps you progress is an objective approach to training in a sustainable way. It is a cliché to say 'practise smarter not harder', but it's a cliché because it works! We'd like to share some 'SMART' tips for your practice.

one. set SMART goals - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed. E.g. 'by the end of this 30 minute practice session, I will perform these audition excerpts through without stopping at the set tempo of 120bpm.' If you had previously learnt the excerpt and your goal was tempo, this would be a specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed goal - and you'd know whether you achieved it and get ideas of what to do next time. Using smart goals can help you structure your practice towards your larger goals over semester and stay objective when you're having a bad day and are unsure if you're on the right track.

two. Always warm up. Warming up prepares

your muscles and tendons for the physical demands of practice, and optimises blood flow and neural input to the muscles that will be used for extended periods. If you don't already have a warm-up routine, you could ask your teacher for ideas specific to you, or check out www.aspah.org.au for some general ideas. If you have a background of surgeries, injuries or medical conditions, or you are unsure what exercises or stretches are right for you, check with your healthcare provider for advice first.

three. Practice sessions should be no longer than 45 minutes at a time. Your body needs a break, and your brain needs time to turn what you've just practised to memory and habitual motor patterns. Organise regular breaks (at least 15 minutes after every 45) within your schedule to stand, stretch away from your work and refuel with some snacks and water - as well as mentally refresh and check you're staying on track! Don't beat yourself up or extend your practice session if you feel it isn't going well - you are here to learn. Reflect on your practice at the end of the session, and move on. There is no mental or physical benefit in continuing to practise when you are too fatigued to learn.

'Practice makes permanent, not perfect' has a neurophysiological truth: our brains and bodies learn to repeat what we repetitively do. It is better to have shorter, more effective practice sessions than to have longer sessions with suboptimal technique. Seek solutions that work for you and ask your teacher for help. If you are injured, ASPAH recommends you seek help from a health professional. ASPAH has online resources on injury prevention and management at www.aspah.org.au.

four. Cool down. Try gently moving your body through your range of motion, away from the positions that it was in when you were practising. Try to slow down your breathing and relax your muscles. Cooling down can help release the tension you have generated during practice, and maximise recovery so that you can play at your peak levels the next time you practise.

five. Learn how to balance practice with rest and recovery - we've included some helpful tips in the next parts of this booklet.



rest+recovery: sleep

"The great thing about sleep is that it gives your brain a chance to make sense of whatever was worrying you during the day. So often, you wake up in the morning and the solution is clear!"
- Janet Karin, OAM, ASPAH committee member, previous Principal Dancer of The Australian Ballet



Image (c) WAAPA - WAAPA musical theatre students performing Carousel

Sleep is essential for survival and to perform at your best. During sleep, your psychological and physiological systems replenish and prepare for the next day. Psychological recovery restores mood, motivation, and ability to learn, recall and consolidate memories. Physiological recovery enables your body to repair and strengthen muscle; maintain bone health; reduce inflammation; metabolise fats/glucose; amongst other important things.

For performers, it can seem impossible to schedule sufficient, regular sleep within constantly changing rehearsal and

performance times; long-distance travel and jet-lag; unfamiliar environments and climates; and extra training time to maintain performance levels. Planning your sleep hours as each day's schedule is posted can help you keep rested and ready to perform.

Most people need 7-9 hours of sleep each night to support optimal general health and daily activity. However, many performing artists are likely to benefit from 10 hours of sleep each night when coping with the physical, emotional and cognitive demands of training, rehearsals or performances.

Extended sleep leads to better mood and higher quality performance while also assisting recovery from psychological and physical injury.

Difficulty in falling asleep and/or numerous waking periods can lead to insufficient amounts of each of the sleep stages and negative health and performance outcomes. For instance, REM (rapid eye movement) sleep enhances recovery processes and leads to better wakefulness during the day. Since periods of REM sleep are more frequent and last longer in the last third of night-time sleep, performers benefit by scheduling extended sleep each night.

If your night-time sleep has been disturbed or insufficient, a short (30-minute) daytime nap can assist your alertness as well as your mental and physical performance. To ensure you can sleep well at night, allow as much time as possible (ideally 8 hours) between waking from your nap and going to bed for the night.

If you are having persistent problems sleeping, see your GP for advice. The following pages contain some advice for setting up a healthy sleep routine, and options your GP may discuss if further treatment is required.

top tips for sleep hygiene

one. Schedule enough sleep (usually 7-10 hours)

two. Maintain consistent times for going to sleep and waking up

three. Relax before going to bed (do something calming, ideally without using a screen)

four. Maintain the room temperature around 19-21°C

five. Make sure your bed is comfortable and your bed-clothes will not overheat you

six. Sleep in a dark, quiet environment - avoid bright light or electronics

still struggling to sleep?

Sleep hygiene has long been the traditional first-step treatment for sleep problems. Current research suggests that different elements of sleep hygiene are effective for different individuals, so the focus should be on finding which help improve your sleep. Although a performer's life can present its own challenges to healthy sleep routines, you do have some control over the following additional factors that can interfere with good sleep.

one. Jetlag: Reset your body clock by spending time outside during daylight hours

two. Napping: Avoid napping during the 8 hours before going to bed

three. Stimulants: Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before going to bed

four. Light: Exposure to blue light signals your brain that it is daytime and you should be awake. Set TV and electronic device displays so they automatically switch to a blue light filter each evening. If your device does not have a blue light filter option such as "Night Shift", "Night Mode" or "Night Light", a variety of free apps for all devices are available online

five. TV and electronic devices (including phones, computer games): Turn these off at least 30 minutes before going to bed

six. Mental readiness: Avoid thought-provoking conversations/activities before bed-time.



insomnia

Insomnia is defined as persistent difficulty in falling or staying asleep, or nonrestorative sleep, associated with distress and/or with significant impairments in daytime function. To arrive at a comprehensive treatment, sufferers are strongly advised to ask a doctor whether their insomnia may be linked to health problems such as sleep apnoea, depression or anxiety.

A chronic lack of sleep increases the risk of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, and obesity. Short-term sleep deprivation, even as little as one night, reduces cognitive function (e.g., concentration and memory). Longer term deprivation reduces muscle power, strength and speed, reaction times, cardiovascular performance and endurance. Inadequate sleep also has a negative impact on emotional stability, motivation and feelings of stress, while increasing the perception of pain and lowering performance levels in athletes and performing artists.

There are many low-cost and effective treatments that can help if you are struggling with your sleep. You could start by applying the sleep hygiene recommendations on the previous page, as these are currently the first-line approach for sleep disturbances. We recommend you also see your GP for specific advice. The following pages have some information about current options your GP may discuss with you, and helpful links to online resources and programs.

second-line treatments your GP may consider with you for persistent insomnia:

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy-Insomnia (known as CBTi, CBT-i, CBTI or CBT-I)

Extensive research shows that Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is the most effective treatment for sleep disturbances and insomnia – as effective as medication in the short term but with continued beneficial effects in the longer term. CBTI training may include stimulus control, sleep restriction, relaxation training and biofeedback, cognitive control and/or individualised sleep hygiene. You can attend CBTI sessions individually or in a group. However, safe, high quality CBTI training is also delivered through the Internet. Many of these are PDF or MP3 based, most include sleep diaries, and some include personal email contact with a therapist. See the websites on the next page for a few ideas.

Medication

In some cases, prescribed medication can offer short term assistance with sleep problems. However, research shows that neither short-term nor medium-term (up to 6 months) medication leads to long-term resolution of sleep problems. On the other hand, risks of continued medication include tolerance, dependence, residual daytime effects, cognitive and psychomotor impairment, withdrawal symptoms, and interaction with other substances. The role of over-the-counter medications is seen as limited.

helpful links for sleep

Brain basics: Understanding sleep. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep>

What is sleep and why do we do it? <https://www.sleepassociation.org/about-sleep/>

Insomnia and CBTI information: www.sleepmattersperth.com/blog/what-is-the-gold-standard-treatment-for-insomnia; www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/cognitive-behavioral-therapy-in-somnia

Comparison of a few online CBTI programs: www.nosleeplessnights.com/cognitive-behavior-therapy-for-insomnia/

SHUTi program: <https://app.shuti.me/>: A well-recommended US-based online program. It recommends a medical evaluation to identify any allied health factors before starting the SHUTi program

CBT for Insomnia: www.cbtforinsomnia.com: US online program, reasonable cost, based on Harvard Medical School research

Sleepio: www.sleepio.com: Well-researched, comprehensive UK-based online program. PDF and MP3 formats

This Way Up: <https://thiswayup.org.au/how-we-can-help/courses/managing-insomnia/>: Australian free online CBT course

Australasian Sleep Association: www.sleep.org.au



Image (c) WAAPA - WAAPA contemporary music students performing

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get fit

"I used to justify not making time for exercise because I was just too dedicated to my instrument; practice was all I had time for. Since I started exercising regularly I've found that it is the key to eliminating so much physical (and mental) tension. Now I see exercise itself as part of my dedication to my instrument."

- Camilla Tafra, Cellist, Teacher, ASPAH Newsletter Editor and Administration Manager



Exercise outside the practice room: why bother? After spending hours each day physically working on music, it might seem hard to fit in general exercise. You might have heard outdated myths such as 'you should stay focussed on practice and practice alone to succeed' or 'artists aren't sporty people.'

Everyone benefits from regular exercise and this is especially true for performers. Every tissue in the body responds to regular exercise. Exercising for as little as 6 weeks can produce measurable improvements in muscle and bone strength/endurance, muscle flexibility/efficiency, tendon strength/flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and neural efficiency. It also has mental health

benefits in decreasing stress, improving mood and sleep, and improving memory and learning.

For the performer these changes add up! Improved energy levels, faster recovery after exertion, increased strength, correction of muscle imbalances gained in repetitive practice of repertoire, greater endurance, and more flexibility... these are just a few things that are likely to help you meet your performance goals and reduce your risk of injury. Balance, body awareness and posture are also vitally important for healthy performance and can be enhanced through regular exercise.

how much is enough?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on physical activity recommend adults aged 18 to 64 years should do at least 150 minutes/week of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes/week of vigorous physical exercise or a combination of the two. This activity should be in bouts of at least 10 minutes in duration.

To strengthen muscles, specific exercises for major muscle groups should be performed three days/week with 48 hours rest between sessions.

Stretching immediately before playing should be dynamic-based stretches with only short holds (~ 5-10 seconds), 2-4 times each muscle group. If stretches are performed not immediately before, during or after playing, then these can be held for 30-60 seconds, performed 3-5 times each muscle group, daily. A stretch should only be performed at a mild to moderate intensity, never to pain or any pins and needles or numbness.

So, simply put, for optimum health performers should try to plan around 30 mins/day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity, and include strengthening exercises around 3 times per week.

what is right for me?

Any activity that gives you moderate or vigorous physical work will do the trick. Walking, jogging, cycling, surfing, swimming, circuit class, yoga, and pilates are all examples of exercise. Choose an activity you enjoy to keep yourself motivated! Ideally something convenient to your lifestyle and budget, which is challenging enough to keep you interested.

If you are unsure about exercise or stretching, or have existing medical conditions, check with your GP, and/or see a physiotherapist who will be able to design an exercise program designed for your fitness level, body and needs. Physiotherapists can rule out any underlying conditions or injuries that may cause you problems during your fitness training. It is also a good idea to complete the adult pre-exercise

screening questionnaire before commencing an exercise program: <https://fitness.org.au> (further links in references at the back of this issue).

Performers should also consider choosing activities that balance out their work position, especially if your playing position is asymmetrical. For example, swimming could help compensate for muscle tightness arising from long hours of sitting playing a string instrument.

how hard should I exercise?

Regardless of your baseline fitness, it is advisable to start small and gradually increase intensity, frequency and duration of exercise over time. This will condition your body evenly and prevent unnecessary injury.

Moderate physical activity increases heart rate and gets you breathing a little more rapidly – you should be able to talk but not sing. Your heart rate should be around 65% of your maximum. Vigorous physical activity makes you breathe deep and huff and puff. Talking in full sentences between breaths should be difficult. Your heart rate should be around 80% of your maximum. Maximum heart rate calculations can vary depending on factors including your age, health status, and any medications you are currently taking. If you would like to know more, ASPAH recommends you discuss with your healthcare professional who can provide you with specific advice for you.

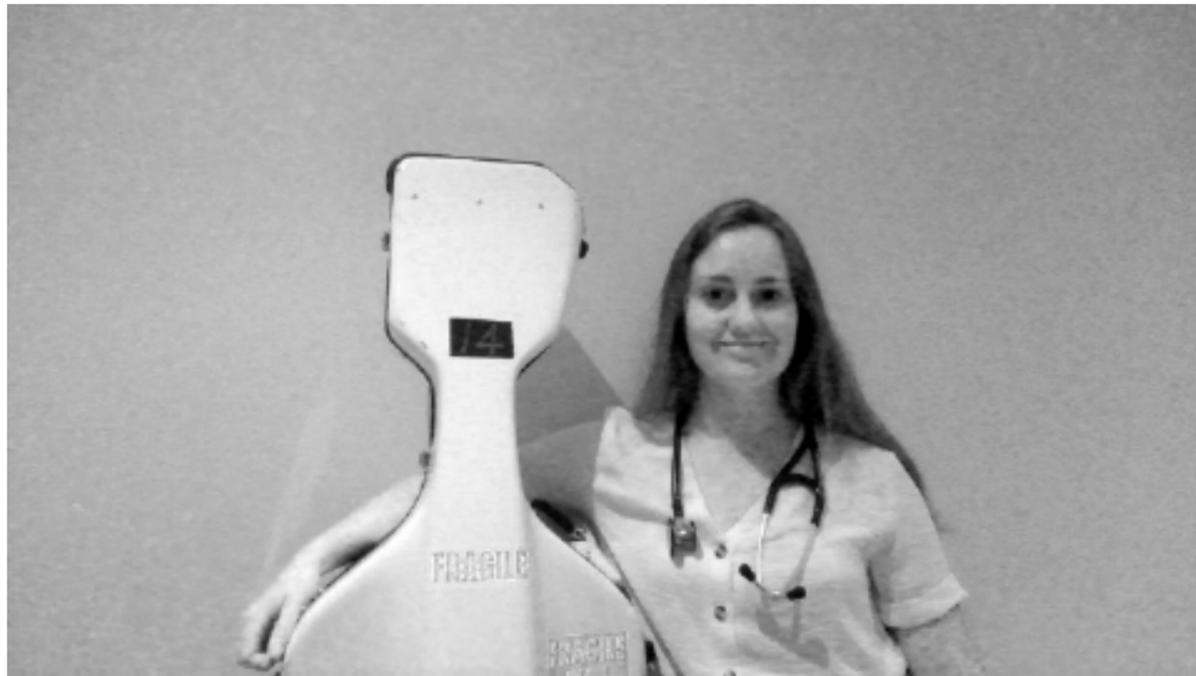
For strengthening exercises, start with a light weight and work towards 3 sets of 8 repetitions for each muscle group you are targeting (try 3-5 muscle groups per session). Remember safety first, don't overdo it!

You could talk to a physio or qualified personal trainer for help. Talk about your needs and mention you want to strengthen your body to improve performance on stage. Mention you need core strength, endurance and muscle tone but not necessarily muscle bulk.

performance healthcare

"When I was a music student, I avoided acknowledging pain or overuse for fear of stigma. I worried any weakness meant I just didn't have what it took. Until I developed pain in my shoulder and saw a physio – who gave me advice and exercises which solved the problem – I had no idea how outdated and uninformed those old ideas were. I never would have described myself as being unhealthy, but the reality is I practised for excessive durations with inadequate hydration, nutrition or rest; did almost no general exercise; and despite great effort would tell myself I wasn't trying hard enough - all terrible ineffective training approaches that I should have kicked to the kerb sooner! Being a physio now, I've seen how the way we think, move, and cross-train has a massive impact on performance, creativity and general wellbeing. Taking care of myself has made me an objectively better performer."

- Amy Naumann, Cellist, Physio, and ASPAH committee member



Historically, performing artists have a strong culture of 'the show must go on.' Some artists have reported a reluctance to address injury or illness due to worries of stigma, missed rehearsals, career opportunities, misinformation or blame. Luckily, the culture surrounding performing arts is changing, and that change continues with you.

Who gets injured or unwell? The answer is "nearly everyone". Performing artists can be injured during their everyday life like anyone else, but they can also incur injuries or illness

resulting from practising or performing. Working in the performing arts is demanding physically and mentally and carries a risk of injury like any other challenging pursuit. Although most are minor conditions, performance-specific healthcare can minimise their impact on your performance, and maximise the chances of a speedy and complete recovery. If poorly managed, even a minor problem can turn into a chronic (long term) problem. It is best to seek advice for injuries early, to give yourself the best chance of recovering quickly – with help to minimise stress and further damage.

You might seek the advice of a healthcare professional (HP) because you have an acute (sudden onset, new) injury, an overuse injury or chronic (longstanding) pain, want to improve your mental health and wellbeing, advice for nutrition to support your training, or any other health-related questions or concerns.

Often this is straightforward and easy, or sometimes it may seem overwhelming to ask for help, especially if you've been worried about the issue for a long time or face an injury inconvenient to your performance schedule. It is helpful to remember that almost everyone will experience a health issue sometime in their career, and seeking advice early is normal and shows a dedication to a long and sustainable career. Don't suffer injury or illness alone!

here are some early signs to seek advice

Even better than good injury management is injury prevention! If you have any of the following while practising, rehearsing or performing you could be risking an overuse injury. We recommend you take a break, rest and recover, re-evaluate, and seek advice if the issue doesn't resolve.

Physical, mental or emotional fatigue
Tingling
Weakness
Reduced coordination or clumsiness
Stiffness/difficulty with daily life

You can check out ASPAH's website for info about different types of healthcare professionals, the Australian healthcare system, and/or check out our members' database of HPs who've nominated experience in performing arts healthcare. Australia has public and private healthcare options. Private services come at a cost to you, so check fees (or excesses if you have private health cover) and investigate concession/student options.

You can access www.aspah.org.au for info about Australia's healthcare system and links to public health resources you can access for information and/or health services. The following pages also have some information about what to expect when you do see a HP and what questions you might like to ask them to make a plan together.

talking to my HP

Before you visit your Health Professional, make a written list of what you want to know. This may include:

one. Can you explain simply what the injury is, and what treatment I may need? What will this cost me and are there public cover options/can I use a healthcare concession card?

two. How long before I can expect to return to practising, and to performing?

three. How much practice, rehearsal or performance can I do now?

four. Can I still do other activities (e.g. a hobby or playing sport)?

five. How can I help my own recovery (e.g. walking, swimming, modified training, fitness training)?

six. What should I avoid to make sure I recover as well as possible?

Early advice from your HP, careful attention to your technique, and an exercise and self-management program may prevent the development of an overuse injury.

A change in practice routine may also alleviate stress on overused areas and allow the body to recover before injury occurs. Instead of thinking of rest and recovery as an unwanted setback, think of it as a normal part of managing your work as a performing artist!



what to expect when visiting a HP

Sometimes knowing a little bit about what to expect can help you feel much more relaxed! We've compiled a list of examples (not exhaustive) of some options your HP may consider with you to help you recover.

Relative rest – careful load management is essential to resolving injuries. Although some injuries need complete rest, most recover with relative rest. Your HP can guide you here on appropriate timeframes and what activity and performance levels are safe to give you the best chance to heal.

Risk factor analysis – recognising and minimising risk factors that may have contributed towards development of injury. For example, you might get tips about how to strengthen muscles that are imbalanced or how to vary prolonged postures to avoid overuse recurring in future.

Physical condition – a high level of general fitness, strength and overall health are important contributors towards optimal performance and recovery. Your rehabilitation will be improved by increasing your general fitness and practising movements that do not involve the injured body part. Remember that adequate sleep will assist your healing (check out our section on Sleep)

Technique analysis – ask your teacher whether any technical habits can be changed to maximise efficiency and reduce overuse or tension. Don't be afraid to ask for specifics.

Practice habits – examine the way you balance practice with rest/recovery and cross-training (doing other kinds of exercise to achieve general strength and flexibility).

Posture analysis – use a video or mirror to examine your posture during training and performance, and ask your HP for tips.

Treatment – your HP may recommend further treatment such as manual therapy, or suggest you make use of ergonomic/supportive aids.

Exercise – you may be prescribed a rehabilitation program of strengthening, cardiovascular exercise, proprioception (body movement and position sense) and stretching.

Movement and somatic therapies – practices such as yoga, Feldenkrais®, Alexander Technique, Ideokinesis, etc. may help restore your coordination and movement patterns

Medication – ask your GP or Pharmacist (chemist) before taking anti-inflammatory or analgesic drugs.

references + useful links

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thanks for the read and stay tuned!

Don't be a stranger! Like the magazine, have feedback, or ideas for a topic you want featured in future issues? You can anonymously give us feedback at this survey:



Please note that due to the volume of submissions, anonymity, confidentiality, and our commitment to safe and rigorous practice, we are unable to provide individual answers or individualised health advice/treatment suggestions via this medium. If you have a health concern, please direct your questions and concerns to your friendly healthcare professional.

ASPAH is a registered charity and this resource was made through the skilled volunteer work of healthcare and performing arts professionals. If you'd like to support our work and help us provide further support to those in the performing arts industry, you could join ASPAH, tell a friend about ASPAH, volunteer time or skills, attend an event, contribute to a culture of sustainable healthy practice at your performing arts workplace place, or donate to ASPAH.

More info at www.aspah.org.au
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