

## Exploring Prevention Opportunities for Pipe Organists

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### The Issue:

- Musicians have a variety of health and safety hazards and often irregular employment situations.
- Pipe organists have an even more unique environment.
- People may think that playing a pipe organ is like a piano – it is not.
- Little is known about occupational health and safety issues for pipe organists.

### Study Objective:

The objective of this study was to explore musculoskeletal, health and related personal and environmental factors influencing pipe organists.

### Methods:

- Study was approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board.
- Surveys were distributed to members of the Royal Canadian College of Organists.
- Information collected included demographics, education, workplace characteristics, musculoskeletal problems, culture and workplace practices during COVID-19.
- Basic descriptive statistics and multivariate models were used.

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### Results:

- There were 254 participants, with a mean age of 58 years and 59% were male.
- 90.5% reported pain.
- The most common body parts affected were the upper extremity, back and neck.
- Most reported the pain lasted greater than one year.
- 60% reported seeking medical or alternate treatment for their pain.
- 45% reported playing knowing that it would aggravate their pain.
- 94% reported that they did not receive any prevention training when studying organ.
- Of the 38 that reported teaching organ in an institutional setting, only 11% reported students receiving any MSK prevention training.
- When asked about possible workplace injury risk factors, many did not recognize these risks. For example, 66% reported they never worked in a bent, twisted or awkward posture.
- 16% reported receiving workplace OHS training.

### Conclusions:

- Organists report a high prevalence of musculoskeletal pain.
- They report low levels of training related to ergonomic risks when a student and once in a workplace. There are opportunities to improve awareness and training.
- This study was the doctoral work of Dr Sarah Svendsen. See the link to her thesis “Understanding Organist Occupational Injury: an Epidemiological Study of Organists”  
<https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/items/eb4a1135-f451-40b7-8095-65d63a232dd7>