

**34th Symposium of the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA), July 2016, Weill  
Cornell Medical College, New York, USA  
Educational Presentation Abstract**

**Title of Presentation:** A Physiotherapeutical Approach to Functional Voice Disorders in Singers

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**Background:** Singers belong to the group of professional voice users with the highest demands regarding voice quality and vocal load. Thus, they also have a high risk of developing a voice disorder, which in return has major impact on their ability to work. Besides voice disorders caused by organic changes, there are functional voice disorders caused by, e.g., a hypertonia of the larynx, shoulder and neck muscles or insufficient breathing patterns. In these cases, physiotherapy can be one component of a multidisciplinary approach to treatment.

**The purpose of this presentation is,** based on anatomical considerations and current evidence, to inform about and demonstrate physiotherapy techniques for treating singers with functional voice disorders.

**Approach of Presentation:** A case from a special physiotherapy outpatient clinic for vocalists will be described. Based on this example, information on the evidence of physiotherapy approaches for functional voice disorders will be provided. Afterwards, some practical hands-on techniques will be demonstrated for participants to try.

**Content of Presentation:** This workshop will focus on the physiotherapy treatment for a vocalist with functional voice disorders. The vocalist experienced changed pitch and hypertonia in both the muscles of the shoulder-neck region and the extrinsic laryngeal muscles. Paralaryngeal manual techniques, in addition to posture and breathing exercises, will be demonstrated with the purpose of mobilizing the larynx and relaxing the hypertonic muscles.

**Conclusions and Practical Relevance:** This workshop highlights the special potential of physical therapy in the treatment of functional voice disorders in singers.

**Key References (optional):**

Kennard EJ, Lieberman J, Saaid A, Rolfe KJ. A preliminary comparison of laryngeal manipulation and postural treatment on voice quality in a prospective randomized crossover study. *J Voice*. 2015;29(6):751-754.

Mathieson L. The evidence for laryngeal manual therapies in the treatment of muscle tension dysphonia. *Curr Opin Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2011;19:171-176.

Vilkman E. Voice problems at work: a challenge for occupational safety and health arrangement. *Folia Phoniatr Logop*. 2000;52:120-125.