

## Ergonomics for Fine Arts



Photo: Heinz Eberhard Boden/Flickr

November 2016



**Early assessment of working conditions and early training will prevent or reduce injuries that can last for a lifetime.**

Artists and staff who work in fine arts departments have particular ergonomic needs that often require specialized approaches. They experience a range of movement, voice, and repetitive strain issues that are different from typical ergonomic stressors experienced by other academic staff.

CAUT has worked closely with academic staff in fine arts programs to determine the types of injuries they experience and to identify ways to prevent such injuries.

The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) has been instrumental in developing the attached technical document. This document, drawing upon the ergonomic expertise of the OHCOW, provides clear instructions on how fine arts staff can work safer.

**For more information:**

Laura Lozanski  
Health & Safety Officer  
Tel. (613) 820-2270  
Fax (613) 820-7244  
2705 Queensview Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K2B 8K2



**The most important concept to remember is what fires together gets wired together so if you override pain signals the pain becomes chronic and extremely difficult to treat.**

Dr. John Chong from the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University and Medical Director of the Musician's Clinics of Canada, who has also contributed to this document, alerts fine arts staff to the following: "The prevention of overuse is the control of use. This simple checklist goes a long way to preventing impairment and disability: A = alignment B = breathing C = coordination D = diet E = exercise F = focus G = goals. The most important concept to remember is 'what fires together gets wired together' so if you override pain signals the pain becomes chronic and extremely difficult to treat."

It is important that fine arts staff identify those stressors that may lead to ergonomic issues before they cause damage. Early assessment of working conditions and early training will prevent or reduce injuries that can last for a lifetime.

Please work with your association's and institution's Joint Health and

Safety Committee to assist with providing safer workspaces, and consult resources like the Musician's Clinics of Canada for advice on care and prevention of ergonomic injuries. It is also important that you let your healthcare providers know and understand exactly what your "work" processes are in the case of an injury so that accurate diagnoses and effective treatment can be given.

Please contact CAUT's Health and Safety Officer for further assistance.

## Resources

John Chong,  
MD BAsc MSc DOHS FRCPC FACPM CGPP ARCT,  
Medical Director, Musicians' Clinics of Canada,  
Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine,  
Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University

Musician's Clinics of Canada  
[www.musiciansclinics.com](http://www.musiciansclinics.com)

Occupational Health Clinics for  
Ontario Workers  
[www.ohcow.on.ca](http://www.ohcow.on.ca)

Performing Arts Medicine Association  
[www.artsmed.org/](http://www.artsmed.org/)

Worker's Health and Safety Centre  
[www.whsc.on.ca](http://www.whsc.on.ca)



Photo: Oriel/ Wikimedia Commons