University of Birmingham Partners in the First National Institute Of Dance Medicine And Science

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Dance medicine experts, dance companies and scientists from the University of Birmingham have joined together to open the National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science.

The National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science (NIDMS) provides a radical new approach to dancers' healthcare which is one of the most pressing problems facing the growing industry. Injury treatment costs the subsidised dance sector on average £900,000 a year and £1 million in lost time. This problem impacts the entire industry.

This initiative is the result of a visionary partnership between six major dance organisations, universities and a hospital and five years of fundraising. The founding partners are Dance UK, Birmingham Royal Ballet's Jerwood Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Dance Injuries, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, University of Wolverhampton, University of Birmingham and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. Together, these institutions employ world leading experts in dance medicine and science, research, education and treatment.

NIDMS aims through shared expertise and a network of multidisciplinary hub-sites and partners, to provide access for all dancers to high quality, evidence-based, dance specific healthcare and dance science services.

It will:
• be a focus for cutting edge research into dancers' health, injury and performance, co-ordinating research nationally which will lead to more effective injury prevention
• provide education for dancers, teachers, scientists, healthcare and medical practitioners
• offer fast, affordable, specialist treatment for dancers, including the first NHS based dance injury clinic accessible FREE via GP referral

At the launch the group announced the initial phase of the National Institute which includes the opening of the first specialist dance injury clinic embedded in the NHS, based at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH) in London. Dancers will be able to access the clinic free via their GP.

The vision is that after establishing the first NHS clinic, further funds will be raised to support the creation of similar services where there are concentrations of dancers across the UK over the next five years. The clinic has already treated several dancers including providing speedy specialist treatment and an operation, via the NHS, for an injured dancer who was performing in ZooNation's Some Like It Hip Hop at the Peacock Theatre. Dancers can also access specialist private treatment through the dance medicine and science services at Trinity Laban and Birmingham Royal Ballet's Jerwood Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Dance Injuries.

Central to NIDMS is its plans to undertake research. The NIDMS partners have designed a large-scale, prospective, epidemiological research project, which is needed to fully understand the multi-dimensional causes of injury in different populations of dancers, and the best strategies for preventing and treating them. This project will be the first of its kind on this scale in dance in the world. It will have an observation – intervention – observation design. Analysis of the data collected will enable the dance sector to develop optimal injury prevention and fitness programmes for dancers working and participating in a variety of contexts, helping to reduce the rate of injuries and get dancers back performing more quickly. This research element of NIDMS will be led by the dance science departments at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and University of Wolverhampton, and the Dance Psychology Research Group in the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences and the School of Psychology at University of Birmingham, working together with the teams at RNOH and Birmingham Royal Ballet's Jerwood Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Dance Injuries.

Existing research shows that 80% of professional dancers suffer an injury every year that stops them working. Like elite athletes, dancers push their bodies to physical extremes to achieve high level performances, yet only the biggest dance companies can afford in-house health teams. The majority of dancers are low paid freelancers who cannot afford private health insurance and the threat of injury and lack of affordable, accessible specialist healthcare is one of a dancer's biggest fears. This is why the creation of the National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science is so important to dancers.

Scientists at the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences and the School of Psychology at the University of Birmingham, will strive to ensure that the Institute can maximise the application of psychological theories and evidence based practice to promote healthier dance participation. This expertise will be channelled to ensure that, long term, the NIDMS can undertake high quality dance psychology research and provide psychology-based education and provision to dancers. The researchers aim to ensure that dance psychology principles are appropriately applied to support dancers and their teachers and other dance professionals to maximise their potential, prevent injury, and facilitate the recovery from such setbacks. One particular focus is on applying motivation-based training to those that work with dancers - the Empowering DanceTM programme - to create adaptive training environments.

The University of Wolverhampton is one of the world's leading dance science and medicine research institutions. It will take a lead in the applied and research endeavours of the NIDMS, with particular focus on physiology and epidemiology.
Professor Joan Duda, from the University of Birmingham School of Sports and Exercise Sciences, says, 'We are very excited about the potential positive impact the Institute will have on dance science and, as a result, dancers' health. For many years, our research has shown that the appropriate application of psychological principles is critical, if we are to address the all too prevalent and worrying statistics regarding dancers' compromised physical and psychological well-being.'

Dr Eleanor Quested from the University of Birmingham's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences says: 'We hope that the Institute will enable us to undertake further dance psychology research and translate the findings to the real world of dance.'

Nick Allen, Clinical Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet's Jerwood Centre for Prevention and Treatment of Dance Injuries said: Birmingham Royal Ballet currently delivers world class support to its company dancers through access to clinical services, research and education. In keeping with the overall vision that NIDMS partners have set nationally, and by working with our Midlands-based partners at University of Wolverhampton and University of Birmingham, we are looking to provide the same level of support to more professional dancers across the region.

Professor of Dance Science at the University of Wolverhampton, Matthew Wyon, is a leading expert in this area, and will be Wolverhampton's representative on the NIDMS Steering Committee. He says: 'The NIDMS will provide an innovative approach to dancers' healthcare and we look forward to working with our partners to develop new research in this area, but more importantly contribute to the health, well-being and performance capabilities of dancers.

'The MSc Dance Science at Wolverhampton is one of the leading courses in the world. Our lecturers and researchers are at the cutting edge of dance science and medicine research, and our course provides an in-depth theoretical and practical understanding of how science and dance interact.'

Ends
Notes to Editors
How the National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science is paid for:

The creation of NIDMS has been made possible by major donations by the Jerwood Charitable Foundation and British Harlequin plc, with generous support from the Society of London Theatres and Theatrical Management Association, and Trinity College London. Many donations have also been made by members of the dance industry. Over 140 individuals made donations as part of The Big Give and Tony Shepherd, PR and Marketing Consultant, ran the 2012 London Marathon in aid of Dance UK's dancers' health work and raised over £2000. Long-term fundraising is ongoing to deliver and sustain the vision of NIDMS.

Background on why National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science is needed:

Dance UK, the support body for the professional dance sector, brought together the NIDMS founding partners after it published the last national survey of dancers' injuries,

Fit to Dance 2 in 2005. Findings included that 80% of dancers suffer an injury that stops them working each year. As a result of this report, industry leaders including dance companies, educational institutions, academics and dance medicine and science specialists united to call for the sector to pool resources and work together to create shared specialist health hubs. This was in recognition that most dance companies, (apart from the major ballet companies) could never afford comprehensive specialist health provision for dancers in house. This led to the creation of the NIDMS partnership which has also consulted closely with the British Olympic Medical Institute and sports science experts.

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