

# Amateur singers, singing teachers less likely to identify serious vocal problems

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Even as American Idol reminds us of the best (and worst) that singing has to offer, a new study cautions that amateur singers and singing instructors are less sensitive than their professional peers to the subtle changes to their voices that could have a serious negative impact on their vocal health.

The new research, published in the April 2008 issue of *Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery*, underscores the importance World Voice Day, celebrated April 16, 2008, which calls attention to the power and significance of one's voice.

Researchers administered the Singing Voice Handicap Index (SVHI) to 171 singers whose singing style ran the spectrum of musical tastes, including country, rock, pop, and gospel.

The SVHI is a tool used for assessing voice handicaps that result from singing problems and is used to identify predictors of patient-perceived handicaps. The type of diagnosis and length of time patients had voice symptoms also influenced the level of the singing voice handicap.

The authors discovered that singers older than 50 scored higher (worse) on the SVHI than their younger peers; amateurs scored worse than professionals, as did singing teachers. Finally, those identifying themselves as gospel singers had worse scores than non-gospel singers.

The authors believe that knowing the factors associated with more serious voice handicaps allows specific singing groups to be targeted for intervention (through vocal health and prevention programs). Furthermore, a comparison of different treatments (both surgical and non-surgical) is needed to maximize the management and outcomes of singing patients.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery

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