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For additional information  
Contact: Larry Lichtenauer  
(410) 363-6205

**BEAUTIFUL - AND PAIN-FREE - MUSIC IS GOAL OF GREATER  
CHESAPEAKE HAND SPECIALISTS PHYSICIAN**

*For past 11 years, Dr. Raymond Wittstadt has studied and offered solutions  
to musicians suffering from repetitive-use injuries*

Baltimore, MD (August 12, 2011) – **Dr. Raymond A. Wittstadt**, a partner with Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists, P.A. (GCHS), appreciates the art of music like most people but, because of his chosen profession, also tends to experience musical performances in a different manner than the average person. For the past eleven years, the recreational guitar player has managed a program that studies and offers solutions to musicians suffering from repetitive use injuries, so he pays special attention to “how” instruments are played in addition to “how well.”

“Athletes of the small muscles,” is the way Dr. Wittstadt describes musicians and, as such, need to approach playing a musical instrument in the same manner in which a sports participant prepares for an upcoming athletic event. That includes methods to insure proper warm-up exercises prior to every practice and performance, strengthening key muscle groups, getting the correct amount of rest between playing and learning how to recognize and deal with injuries to the fingers, hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder.

Evaluation of the musician study is designed to pinpoint the source of pain and map out customized solutions to alleviate the problems. Wittstadt explains that carpal tunnel syndrome, nerve entrapment and tendonitis are the issues that he most often sees within this group.

Dr. Wittstadt offers the following tips for musicians – from the beginner to the semi-professional or professional – to help prevent repetitive use injuries:

- following the lead of athletes, be sure to properly limber and warm up by stretching and exercising the specific parts of the body that are about to be used. An exact regime can be prescribed by a physician or a hand therapist.

- avoid over-stretching.

- develop an exercise regimen between practice or performance sessions to strengthen key areas including fingers, wrists, hands and shoulders.

- any increase in instrument or technique should be accompanied by a decrease in practice time to avoid injury.

- take frequent breaks while playing musical instruments and don't over-practice or perform. Understand when parts of the body have reached their "maxed-out" limit and pay attention to what your body may be trying to tell you.

- examine the "Alexander Technique" which encompasses a synergistic relationship between posture and the placement and use of the hands that helps reduce injury among musicians.

- never play through pain, such as tightness, dull aches, numbness or throbbing and immediately visit a specialist if any of these symptoms manifest while playing. If a severe pain occurs while practicing or playing, seek immediate medical attention.

"Cumulative years of practicing and playing musical instruments may eventually take a physical toll on the body, but there are a number of preventative and pre-emptive measures that can be implemented to significantly reduce and minimize these risks," explained Dr. Wittstadt. "The first step is to recognize the inherent dangers of repetitive-use injuries, followed by an in-depth education phase from trained specialists or physicians. It is incumbent of all musicians to take this issue more seriously and understand the risks," he added.

Raymond A. Wittstadt obtained degrees as a Nurse, Certified Nurse Practitioner, a Physician's Assistant and a Master's in Public Health prior to earning his Medical Doctorate from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. His post-graduate Orthopaedic residency was conducted at the Union Memorial Hospital, followed by the Hand and Upper Extremity Fellowship at the Curtis National Hand Center at Union Memorial.

Founded in 1987 and based in Lutherville, MD, Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists, P.A. focuses on providing successful outcomes for the entire spectrum of problems associated with the hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder. The practice group, which consists of nine full-time physicians, maintains seven satellite locations throughout Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Howard and Talbot counties, as well as Baltimore City. For more information visit [www.chesapeakehand.com](http://www.chesapeakehand.com)