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**REPEAT WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS: RISK FACTORS, COSTS AND WORK DISABILITY**Rasa Ruseckaite, Alex Collier *Monash University, Melbourne, Australia*

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**Objectives** To describe factors associated with repeat workers' compensation claims and to compare the work disability arising in workers with single and multiple compensation claims.

**Methods** All initial injury claims lodged by persons of working age during year 1996–2000 and any repeat claims were extracted from workers' compensation administrative data in the state of Victoria, Australia. Workers' groups with single and multiple claims were identified. Descriptive analysis by affliction, bodily location, industry segment, occupation, employer and workplace was undertaken. Survival analysis determined the impact of these variables on the time between claims. The economic impact and duration of work incapacity associated with initial and repeat claims was compared between groups.

**Results** 37% of persons with an initial claim lodged a second claim. This group contained a significantly greater proportion of males, were younger and more likely to be employed in manual occupations and high-risk industries than those with single claims. 78% of repeat claims were for a second injury. Duration between the claims was shortest when the working conditions had not changed. The initial claims of repeat claimants resulted in significantly lower costs and work disability than repeat claims.

**Conclusions** A substantial proportion of injured workers experience a second occupational injury or disease. These workers pose a greater economic burden than those with single claims, and also experience a substantially greater cumulative period of work disability. There is potential to reduce the social, health and economic burden of workplace injury by enacting prevention programs targeted at these workers.