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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH INDICATORS FROM THE FRENCH EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME FOR WORK-RELATED MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

Catherine Ha,¹ Julien Briere,¹ Julie Plaine,¹ Natacha Fouquet,¹ Yves Roquelaure,² Ellen Imbernon¹ ¹InVS, Saint-Maurice, France; ²University of Angers, Angers, France

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Objectives Since 2002, the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS) has developed an epidemiological surveillance program for work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in order to set up health indicators according to gender, age, occupational categories and economic sectors.

Methods As indicators of health impact, the incidence of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), the prevalence of the main upper limb MSDs, the fractions of incident CTS cases and the number of surgical CTS cases attributable to work were estimated. As indicators of exposure, scores of exposure to biomechanical, psychosocial and organisational risk factors were constructed using a random sample of 3710 workers from the Pays-de-la-Loire region.

Results Incidence rates of CTS and prevalence rates of clinically-diagnosed MSDs were estimated (data published). Other health impact indicators show that fractions of incident CTS cases attributable to work ranged from 16% to 33% in females clerks, from 8% to 16% in females blue-collar workers, and from 30% to 56% in male blue-collar workers. The estimated number of surgical CTS cases attributable to work among female workers aged 20–59 ranged from 22% to 51% of all surgical cases of this age group in France. Occupational exposure indicators show for instance that 20% (95% CI 18 to 22) of females and 17% (15 to 19) of males were exposed to a highly repetitive job (>4 h/day), to at least one extreme posture and to a forceful exertion (>2 h/day).

Conclusions These indicators will be regularly produced to make the results of this surveillance program more helpful for prioritising preventive strategies.