OCCUPATION-SPECIFIC FREQUENCY OF SICK-LEAVE DUE TO VARICOSE VEINS OF THE LOWER EXTREMITIES

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Objectives Chronic venous disorders of the lower limbs are a frequent condition in the general population. In the working population, prolonged standing at work is associated with the development of diseases of varicose veins. The aim is to identify high risk occupations based on data on sick-leave due to varicose veins of the lower extremities.

Methods The analysis was based on a secondary data analysis of sick-leave of almost all German statutory health insurances in 2008. The database contains aggregated data of approximately 26.2 million insured employees. The occurrence of sick-leave due to the diagnosis varicose veins of the lower extremities (ICD-10 I83) is defined as outcome variable. The assignment of employees to occupational groups (according to Blossfeld 1985 based on the German Classification of Occupations) is considered as exposure variable. Morbidity ratios (SMR) stratified by sex and age group with 99.9% confidence intervals were estimated (reference: qualified mercantile and administrative occupations).

Results Compared to the reference group the expected number of sick-leave was particularly increased for manual workers with low skill level (men: SMR 1.61 [1.55–1.68], women: SMR 1.51 [1.43–1.58]) and high skill level (men: SMR 1.61 [1.53–1.68], women SMR 1.73 [1.61–1.84]). In both genders, sick-leave was also higher than expected for low-skilled mercantile and administrative occupations as well as low-skilled service workers. An example of a high skilled manual occupation with an increased risk is confectioner (men: SMR 3.08 [1.92–4.63], women: SMR 2.74 [1.78–4.00]). Among women, the risk of semi-professions, qualified service workers, and agricultural workers was also higher than the reference group.

Conclusions An ageing workforce is expected in the future. Thus, interventions focussed on the reduction of prolonged standing particularly among manual occupations in production and service should be initiated and evaluated for the primary and secondary prevention of varicose veins.

TIME TO RETURN TO WORK FROM SICKNESS ABSENCE IN HEALTH CARE WORKERS

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Objectives A comprehensive programme to facilitate return to work (RTW) was started in 2011 in a health care centre with a sustained impact until now. The objective of this study was to analyse time to RTW to guide interventions in more specific groups.

Methods The study population was a cohort of 5,881 health care workers in a large health institution during 2011 that includes two acute care centres, a psychiatry institute, one long term care centre, two schools of health studies and one research centre. Data on the study population and sickness absences (SA) were obtained through electronic records of Human Resources Department. Incidence of SA per 100 workers was described. Median SA durations and interquartile ranges were calculated using Wång-Chang estimator. Multilevel poisson-based conditional frailty models were used to calculate time to RTW hazard ratios (HRs) and associated 95% confidence intervals (CI95%). A HR lower than 1 expresses a longer duration of SA until RTW than the reference group.

Results A total 787 episodes of SA were identified, of which 608 (77%) lasted more than 7 days. Incidence of SA was higher in women, nurses’ aides and nurses, those with a permanent contract, in direct patient care, psychiatry and geriatrics, and increased with age. Differences within groups tended to be higher for long (>7 days) than short episodes. Regarding time to RTW, adjusted HRs (HRa) decreased for older workers (HRa 45–54years: 0.37; CI95% 0.19–0.37; HRa 55–64years: 0.27; CI95% 0.13–0.33), and were associated with holding a permanent contract (HRa 0.60; CI95% 0.39–0.91). Non statistically significant associations were found for sex, centre, occupation or type of care.

Conclusions Ageing population at work plays an important role and interventions to facilitate RTW are essential to maintain people active. Presenteeism or working even when having a health condition, should be seriously addressed.