Determinants of Modified Work as Part of the Return-to-Work Process for Injured Workers with Musculoskeletal Injuries in British Columbia, Canada

Mieke Koehoorn*, Christopher B McCloyd, Lillian Tamburic, Esther Maas. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Introduction The longer an injured worker is off work the less likely they are to return to work and modified work is associated with shorter recovery durations. However, low rates of modified work have been found in Canadian compensation jurisdictions. This study investigated the determinants of modified work among workers with musculoskeletal injury compensation claims in British Columbia.

Methods Three cohorts of injured workers were identified from compensation claims for back strain, limb fractures and connective tissue injuries. The effect of age, sex, occupation, wage quintile and prior claim on at least one modified day (yes/no) within the first four weeks of claim was analysed using Poisson regression.

Results In multivariable models, female gender was associated with an increased likelihood of modified work (back strains: IRR 1.15 [95%CI 1.06, 1.25]; limb fractures: 1.22 [0.91, 1.64]; connective tissue injuries: 1.14 [0.85, 1.52]), while older age (e.g. 55 to 65 years) was associated with a decreased likelihood (back strains: IRR 0.69 [95%CI 0.63, 0.76]; limb fractures; connective tissue injuries: 0.59 [0.43, 0.81]). Higher income was associated with an increased likelihood of modified work for limb fractures (highest quintile: IRR 1.84 [1.27, 2.67]). The effect of occupation was variable on modified work by injury type.

Discussion Unmeasured injury severity may have resulted in residual confounding of disability duration by gender and age. The offer of modified work may be dependent on occupation and the flexibility of higher paying occupations. The overall low rate of modified work for musculoskeletal injuries (<30%) warrants further investigation.

Poster Presentation Other

A Brazilian Look at Occupational Health and Safety in the USA: Observation and Learning with COSH Groups

Sandra Cavalcante, Rodolfo Vilela, Carlos Siqueira. *1School of Public Health – University of São Paulo, São Paulo/SP, Brazil, 2College of Public and Community Service – University of Massachusetts, Boston/MA, USA

Poster Presentation

Labour laws in the United States of America are less protective than the norms of most countries, including Brazilian ones. However, there is a strong militant movement for occupational safety and health in USA, organised in an articulated network that includes university professors and students, trade unionists, community leaders, public agents and various sectors workers.

The successful experience of the social activism of the Committees on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) groups, which have been advocating for the safety and health of workers in the United States for 45 years, deserves propagation and study because it can inspire similar initiatives in Brazil and in other countries.

This exploratory research collected data through open interviews with workers, lawyers, teachers, researchers and activists heard between October/2013 and March/2014, as well as directed observation and interviews made during three events held in Boston and Baltimore (COSH Network, APHA 2013 and National Worker Safety and Health Conference).

The results show that COSHs are alliances that promote education and advocacy for workers’ health and safety. They articulate a national agenda to improve health and safety conditions for immigrant workers under the prevention bias, providing information and support in Spanish and other languages, as well as advocating for just compensation for workers who are ill or injured at work. They also carry out activities to integrate health and safety activism into organised campaigns, as well as advocate for the respect of existing health and safety laws and fight for new protections for workers.