



Characteristics of Injuries Not Reported by Employers

Workers' compensation claims not reported in the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses: Injury and claim characteristics

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Overview

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is an important source of workplace health and safety data, publishing annual estimates of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses for the US and most states. Estimates are based on employer-reported data, collected through the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII). Employers are instructed to submit data based on their OSHA injury and illness records and to provide detailed information for severe injuries and illnesses – defined as cases involving one or more days of missed work.

SOII underestimates workplace injuries and illnesses. This may be due, in part, to the difficulty in capturing injuries that start as a minor condition but worsen over time eventually resulting in missed work, sometimes not until after employers have submitted SOII data.

The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) estimate the number of cases that progress from a minor condition at the time of employer reporting to a missed work case sometime after, and 2) identify the types of injuries with missed work most likely to go unreported in SOII.

We linked Washington workers' compensation data to SOII data to estimate the timing of missed work, and to identify characteristics associated with claims not reported in SOII.

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Research for Safe Work

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Key Findings

Timing of missed work

- One in five workers' compensation claims missed work only after the survey year, and would not have been eligible for SOII case reporting at the time of SOII data collection.

Employer reporting by timing of missed work

- 62% of all claims involving missed work were reported in the SOII. Reporting differed by timing of missed work:
 - 72% of claims that missed work during the survey year were reported
 - 25% of claims that missed work only after the survey year were reported

Employer reporting by claim characteristics

- Claims most likely to be reported included: immediate hospitalizations, fractures and open wounds.
- Claims least likely to be reported included: upper extremity sprains and strains, those where the validity of the claim was questioned by the employer, and claims with missed work that did not occur until three months after the initial injury.

Impact

Injuries that progress in severity over time are not well captured by the BLS SOII. Modifying the SOII data collection process could improve case capture and provide a more complete view of US occupational injuries.

Find the article here:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.22685/abstract>

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