

## Overview

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD's), such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and bursitis remain a major occupational health problem despite decades of research, outreach and intervention.

In this study, workers with compensable worker's compensation claims for musculoskeletal or cumulative trauma injuries from industries identified as high-risk for WMSDs were interviewed. They were asked about topics such as the nature of their job, how their injury occurred, and how their injury could have been prevented. The objective of this research was to gather information that will be used to create more effective education and outreach materials to promote early identification and prevention of WMSDs.

This paper presents the preliminary findings of an ongoing research study.

## Worker Perceptions of Musculoskeletal Injury

Perceptions of risk from workers in high risk industries with work related musculoskeletal disorders

Daniel Hunter, MA and Barbara Silverstein, PhD, MPH. *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment, and Rehabilitation*, 2014 (49):4, 689-703.

### Key Findings

Injured workers in industries at high-risk for WMSDs:

- Showed low awareness of their risk for a musculoskeletal injury
  - While WMSDs are associated with cumulative trauma, 80% of injured workers felt that their injury happened suddenly, rather than gradually over time
  - Many workers asserted that they could not have expected such an injury to happen to them; 15% used the term 'freak' or 'fluke' when describing their injury
- Inappropriately rationalized pain as an inevitable part of their job
  - Many workers described working through pain as 'just part of the job'; or described their injury as 'just one of those things' or 'everybody gets hurt'
  - Many workers did not view frequent aches and pains as an indication that a more severe injury was possible
- Inappropriately blamed themselves for their injuries
  - Over half of the workers described some form of self-blame for their injury

### Impact

Workers in high-risk industries often lack understanding of how to recognize and protect themselves from WMSDs. Injured worker perceptions of WMSD risk factors can be used to develop more effective education and prevention materials.

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## Research for Safe Work

The SHARP Program at the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries partners with business and labor to develop sensible, effective solutions to identify and eliminate industry-wide hazards. Learn more at [www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/)

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