

Overview

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is among the most costly of all musculoskeletal disorders as measured by workers' compensation claims costs and lost workdays. But the burden of carpal tunnel syndrome extends far beyond the costs covered by workers' compensation insurance.

Costs to the injured worker and their household include continuing pain, loss of function, adverse financial impacts and disruption of social roles.

To explore the ways in which CTS may affect their well-being, a survey was administered covering health, social, economic and work-related outcomes. A total of 1,255 injured workers took the survey six years after their Washington State Fund workers' compensation claim had opened.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a Long-term Burden

The Long-term Burden of Work-related Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Relative to Upper-extremity Fractures and Dermatitis in Washington State

American Journal of Industrial Medicine, 2015
Michael Foley and Barbara A Silverstein

Key Findings

- The medical and wage replacement costs of carpal tunnel syndrome represent only a fraction of the full burden of their condition.
- Six years following the opening of their claim, people with CTS suffered substantial losses compared to people who lost the use of their arm through an upper-arm fracture or those who had dermatitis. These losses occurred across all four of the measured outcome areas.
- Significant deficits were found in their social and financial status as well as their physical and mental health.
 - They were twice as likely to have divorced or separated from their spouse.
 - They were almost twice as likely to not be back at work.

Impact

Policy needs to address the long-term burden of carpal tunnel syndrome on workers and their households. Services that provide long-term physical and mental health, social and workplace support may help close the gap in poor outcomes for workers with CTS.

Contact the author:

Michael.Foley@Lni.wa.gov

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/

Find the article here:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.22540/abstract>