

Overview

Occupational health surveillance data are used to generate state and national estimates of the incidence of work-related injury and illness. These estimates are used to guide policy making and the development of workplace safety programs. However, estimates of the rates of specific conditions often vary between data sources. One possible reason is that the same injury may be classified differently in different data sources.

In this study, cases reported to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (BLS SOII) over a three year period were linked to Washington State workers' compensation claim data to compare injury classification coding between the two systems. The researchers also showed how population estimates of certain occupational injuries would differ depending on the source of the data.

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Research for Safe Work

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Differences in Injury Classification

Injury Classification Agreement in Linked Bureau of Labor Statistics and Workers' Compensation Data

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Key Findings

- Only one in five injuries was coded identically in both data sources for all three injury characteristics assessed: the nature of the injury or illness, the part of the body affected, and the event or exposure responsible.
- Classification agreement was greatest for affected body part and lowest for event or exposure.
- Classification agreement was better for traumatic injuries than non-traumatic conditions.
- Among matched cases, workers' compensation injury classifications estimated 94% more amputations than the SOII over the same period of time.
- Among matched cases, SOII-assigned injury codes estimated 34% more work-related musculoskeletal disorders than workers' compensation.

Impact

Work-related injuries may be classified differently in different sources of occupational health data. Accounting for these discrepancies could increase agreement in the estimation of specific workplace injuries and illnesses derived from different data sources.

Find the article here:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.22289/abstract>

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