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Occupational health and safety experience of British Columbia's healthcare workers

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This study examines occupational injury patterns of healthcare workers by analyzing injuries that resulted in time-loss from work. For a large health region in British Columbia, the association of injury rates with the worker demographics and workplace characteristics is examined over a one year period from April 5th, 2007 to March 31st, 2008.

METHODS

Three databases were used to generate this report: payroll data, injury investigation data, and workers compensation data. A standardized operation database provided injury data, payroll data provided productive hours as denominators while compensation data were used to provide time-loss information for injuries. Poisson regression was used to calculate relative risks of injuries and the adjusted variables were gender, age, employment status, sub-sector, and occupation.

RESULTS

A total of 944 injuries were studied. Long-term care (15.5/ 100 person years) experienced the highest injury rates throughout the period compared to the acute (6.0) and community care (5.6). Female, younger and full-time workers had high injury rates. In terms of occupation, facility support services had the highest risk of injury.

Results from the Poisson regression model show that male workers were lower at risk (0.72-95% CI 0.57-0.91) than female workers and casual workers (0.63-0.52-0.78) were significantly lower at risk than full-time colleagues. Long term care (1.30-1.10-1.54) was at significantly high risk compared to acute care and in terms of occupation, compared to registered nurses, facility support, maintenance, care aide, and licensed practical nurses had significantly higher risk of injury whereas health science professionals and administrative professionals had significantly lower risk of injury.

CONCLUSIONS

The occupational health and safety status of healthcare workers vary by gender, sub sector, age, and occupations. Occupational health and safety research and policy making should target vulnerable work and demographics characteristics.