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Incidence of low back pain related occupational diseases in The Netherlands

Harald S Miedema

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Background: Until recently no evidence based criteria were available to determine the work-relatedness of low back pain (LBP) in an individual worker. Incidence figures for LBP that can be qualified as occupational disease (OD) are scarce. The trend in the number of OD-notifications due to LBP in the Netherlands and estimated incidence rates of LBP-related OD-notifications were studied.

Methods: An instrument was developed for the assessment of work-relatedness of non-specific LBP (NLBP) in 2004, accompanied by an OD-registration-guideline. It was analyzed the trend in LBP-related OD-notifications in the Netherlands from 2004-2011 and estimated incidence rates for LBP-related OD-notifications in the period 2009-2011.

Results: After implementation of the instrument and guideline, a huge increase in numbers of OD-LBP-related notifications were noticed, from 0.7% of all notified ODs in 2004, via 8.6% in 2005 and 13.6% in 2008, to 9.1% in 2011. The incidence rate of ODs due to NLBP at 24.1 per 100,000 worker years (19.2 for NLBP), with a large difference between men and women (31.3 and 3.2 respectively) were noted.

Conclusions: The instrument for the assessment of work-relatedness of NLBP played an important role in the recognition of LBP-related ODs. It provides a basis for a uniform and objective evaluation of the role of work-related risk factors in the occurrence of NLBP. This knowledge can be used to initiate or direct preventive actions towards subgroups with higher incidence rates.

Biography

Harald S Miedema is professor at the Research Centre Innovations in Care at Rotterdam university of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands since 2005. His main topics are Work and Health, especially Musculoskeletal Disorders, and Evidence Based Physiotherapy. In 2014 he plans to finish his PhD at Erasmus University Medical Centre (Erasmus MC) in Rotterdam. From 2000-2010 he was director of the Knowledge Centre for Workrelated Musculoskeletal Disorders at Erasmus MC. Before that he worked at Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZONMw) in the Hague and Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) in Leiden.

h.s.miedema@hr.nl