



Back Pain and the Older Construction Worker

Chronic back pain among older construction workers in the United States: a longitudinal study

Xiuwen S. Dong, Xuanwen Wang, Alissa Fujimoto, Ronald Dobbin. International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health, May 2012.

Overview

Back pain or back problems affect a large portion of the workforce. Compared with non-construction workers, back pain and problems were more severe for construction workers and accounted for the greatest percentage of claims costs and disability days. CPWR researchers assessed chronic back pain and problems among older construction workers in the U.S. by analyzing data from the 1992–2008 Health and Retirement Study, a large nationally-representative longitudinal survey of U.S. residents aged 50 and older. This study provides evidence that employment history and long-term occupational exposures are significantly associated with persistent back disorders.

Key Findings

- Nearly 40% of construction workers over the age of 50 reported suffering from back pain.
- After controlling for a variety of individual factors possibly associated with back pain, workers over 50 who reported that their longest-held job was in the construction industry were 32% more likely to experience persistent back pain or problems when compared to those in non-construction.
- Stressful jobs and physically demanding work increased the likelihood of back disorders by 36% and 21%, respectively.
- Workers who reported poor physical or mental health were significantly more likely to report persistent pack pain than those in excellent health.
- Older workers who resided in the Northeast and West were more likely than their southern counterparts to experience back pain.

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See abstract:

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