

Gender differences in care-seeking behavior and health care consumption after work-related whiplash injuries

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Background

The aim was to study gender differences in care-seeking behaviour regarding type of facility, time span and type of treatment after work-related motor vehicle trauma (WRMVT) and to investigate the incidence of WRMVT.

Methods

Design: Cross-sectional retrospective study.

Setting: A population-based register in a Swedish county from 1999 to 2008.

Participants: A cohort of 820 persons, 18-65 years of age, involved in traffic accidents, either working at the time of the trauma, or on their way to or from work, resulting in a clinical whiplash diagnosis.

Results

Women sought care at primary health care units more often than men, who sought care mainly at hospitals ($p=0.0048$). Four percent of the injured persons were treated at hospital. Twelve percent of all patients involved in WRMVT sought care with a delay of at least three days. Women sought care later than men ($p=0.011$). There was no difference in gender regarding type of treatment after trauma. Ninety-one percent were treated and discharged and six percent were sent home untreated after examination. Fifty-two percent of the injured persons sought care at primary care units. The annual incidence of WRMVT decreased from 68/100 000 to 43/100 000.

Conclusion

The incidence of WRMVT in the rural and urban county declined during 1999-2008. Women sought care at primary care units more often than men. Women sought care later than men after the trauma which may reduce especially women's probability of getting workers compensation.

Key messages

- Gender differences exist in WRMVT, women seek primary health care more often, and later than men do which may affect insurance outcomes for women.
- The annual incidence of acute whiplash disorders due to WRMVT decreased from 68/100 000 to 43/100 000 inhabitants annually between 1999 to 2008.