

**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.