Prevalence and Trends of Rheumatic Diseases in the US Workforce

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INTRODUCTION

- Musculoskeletal disorders (such as arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus and fibromyalgia) are becoming more prevalent, not just as the population ages, but also as a consequence of environmental exposures, and workplace organization.
- Research on arthritis and employment has demonstrated that having arthritis increases the risk of job loss.

OBJECTIVE

- Examine the prevalence and trends of musculoskeletal disorders (e.g. arthritis) by occupation, NORA sectors, white collar, blue collar, farming and service worker categories & employment status.

METHODS

- 2004-2008 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) data utilized with measures on participant arthritis status, occupation and demographics.
- Additional detailed information on specific rheumatic diseases were collected in years 2007 and 2008 (i.e. arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, and fibromyalgia).
- Analyses completed with the PASW Statistics 18 and PASW Complex Sample package to take into account sample weights & design effects.
- Sample weights adjusted to account for aggregation of data over multiple survey years.

RESULTS

- Age-adjusted prevalence of arthritis was 21.7±0.2% among all adult participants (14.2 ± 0.2% for the employed and 33.5 ± 0.3% for unemployed adults).
- Arthritis was highest among Healthcare support (17.0±1.0%) and Protective Service occupations (16.7±1.1%), and lowest among Computer and mathematical (11.2±1.1%) and Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations (11.0± 2.0%).
- Specific arthritis conditions varied: arthritis (17.5±0.3%), rheumatoid arthritis (2.1±0.1%), gout (1.3±0.1%), lupus (0.3±0.0%), and fibromyalgia (1.2± 0.1%).
- No significant overall arthritis or type-specific (e.g. rheumatoid, gout, lupus) trends across the study period.

CONCLUSIONS

- Arthritis and specific arthritis conditions have considerable variation in the US workforce.
- Workplace adaptations, professional and educational guidance, and help from employers to assist adults with rheumatic conditions in the workplace are needed.