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**The Independent Newspapers Limited
Study: An Investigation into
Occupational Overuse Syndrome
Within the Newspaper Industry.**

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of
Arts in Psychology, at
Massey University.

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1993

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Dedicated to my father
John George Pirie.

ABSTRACT

An investigation was undertaken into occupational overuse injuries. Overuse injuries are commonly associated with repetitive movements, sustained or constrained postures, and forceful movements. Other factors, such as work environment, amount of keyboard use, and the ergonomic status of the work area, have been identified as elements in the development of overuse injuries. These perspectives were used to provide research objectives in studying a sample of subjects working in the newspaper industry.

Five hundred and seventy five respondents completed a questionnaire, which included a measure of the incidence and severity of overuse injuries, and questions aimed at discovering the effectiveness of different types of treatment and intervention strategies. Using a combination of descriptive and bivariate statistics, this data was analyzed.

The analysis revealed low levels of reported muscular aches and pains. Of those subjects who did report some form of ache or pain, the majority answered that the level of their aches and pains had remained the same. As well, the image of the aetiology of overuse injuries which emerged, was in contradiction to much of the proceeding research in this area. The analysis also demonstrated that the treatment and intervention strategies being employed were ineffective. This was despite the fact that subjects often reported that they considered a particular strategy to be productive in managing their overuse injury.

In the discussion section, the limitations of the questionnaire as a survey technique in this area of research was considered, and the possible effects these limitations have on the present study. This point has special relevance to the application of clinical models of overuse injury.

It was concluded that the results demonstrated a need for research into effectively manipulating working conditions to counter-act the development, incidence and severity of overuse injuries. Such strategies as job enlargement and job rotation were suggested.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Glossary	ix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Electronic Office	1
1.2 International Experience of Occupational Overuse Injuries	4
1.3 Problems With the Terminology of Occupational Overuse Injuries	7
1.4 The Development of the General Construct of "Occupational Overuse Syndrome"	9
1.5 Aetiology	10
1.6 Developing Occupational Overuse Syndrome Through VDU work	12
1.7 Ergonomics Aspects	14
1.8 Personal, Social and Environmental Aspects	19
2 MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES	22
2.1 Management and Prevention	22
2.2 Treatment or Management of Localized Conditions	22
2.3 Treatment of Diffuse Muscle Conditions	25
2.3.1 Acupuncture/Acupressure	25
2.3.2 Relaxation	25
2.3.3 Rest	26
2.3.4 Postural Advice	26
2.3.5 General Exercise	26
2.3.6 Medication	27

		iv
2.3.7	Splinting or Binding	27
2.3.8	Heat treatment	28
2.3.9	Physiotherapy	28
2.3.10	Massage	28
2.3.11	Surgery	28
2.3.12	Occupational Therapy	28
2.3.13	Changing the Job design	29
2.3.14	Changing the Ergonomic design of the Workplace and/or Worktool	29
2.3.15	Miscellaneous	30
3	THE CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE OF OOS	31
3.1	Clinical Classification of Occupationally Derived Overuse Injuries	31
3.2	The Three-Stage Clinical Model	34
3.2.1	A Description of the Three-Stage Clinical Model	36
4	THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	37
4.1	The Present Proposal	37
4.2	The Independent Newspapers Limited (INL) Study	37
5	METHOD	39
5.1	Subjects	39
5.2	The Research Measure	41
5.3	Procedure	47
5.4	Analysis Plan	48

6	RESULTS	50
6.1	Return Rates	50
6.2	Demographic Frequency and Cross Tabulation Runs	50
6.3	T-Test Analysis of the Effectiveness of Intervention Strategies	58
6.4	Analysis of Occupation Category through ANOVA	65
6.5	Correlations of Severity of Incidence of Discomfort By Body Area	67
7	DISCUSSION	71
7.1	Limitations of the Questionnaire Form of Survey Analysis	71
7.2	The Implications of the Use of a Medical Concept of Pain	73
7.3	Assessing the Results of the Independent Newspaper Limited Study ...	75
7.3.1	The Aetiology of OOS Within The Independent Newspapers Limited Sample	76
7.3.2	The Usefulness of a Three-Stage Clinical Model	80
7.3.3	An Assessment of the Severity and Reversibility of Overuse Injuries	82
7.3.4	An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Existing Treatment Strategies Being Employed to Deal with Overuse Injuries	84
7.4	Future Recommendations	85
	REFERENCES	89
	APPENDICES	100
	APPENDIX 1: The Slovak and Trevers Questionnaire (1988)	100
	APPENDIX 2: Additional Clinical Information on RSI	102
	APPENDIX 3: The Independent Newspapers Limited Questionnaire for Occupational Overuse Syndrome	104
	APPENDIX 4: The Covering Letter and The Follow-up Letters To The Independent Newspapers Limited Questionnaire	115

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
5.1 Pie Graph of Occupation Categories	40
5.2 Pie Graph of Other Occupation Categories	40
6.1 The Reportage of Muscular Aches and Pains by Occupation Category	51
6.2 Distribution of the Reported Level of the Severity of Muscular Aches and Pains by Specific Body Area Using a Clinical Three-Stage Model of Severity	52
6.3 Reported Severity of Muscular Aches and Pains	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1.1 Factors Influencing Physical Capacity	20
5.1 Occupation Categories	39
5.2 Other Occupation Categories	41
6.1 The Distribution and Return Rate of the Questionnaires by the Eight Independent Newspaper Limited Offices	50
6.2 Reportage of Muscular Aches and Pains	53
6.3 Questions on Muscular Aches and Pains	56
6.4 Reportage of Hours Per Day that Respondents Felt Muscular Aches and Pains	57
6.5 T-Tests Results for Major Demographic Variables on the Severity Measure	60
6.6 T-Tests Results for the New Activities Variable on the Severity Measure	61
6.7 T-Test Results for the Reduced Activities Variable on the Severity Measure	62
6.8 T-Test Results for the Health Professional Treatment Variable on the Severity Measure	63
6.9 T-Test Results for the Best Help Variables on the Severity Measure.	64
6.10 T-Test Results for the Ergonomic Variables on the Severity Measure	66
6.11 Means and Number of Valid Cases for the Reported Severity of Muscular Aches and Pains by Body Areas	67
6.12 Correlations of the Reported Level of Severity of Aches and Pains by Specific Body Areas	68

6.13	Further Correlations of the Reported Level of Severity of Muscular Aches and Pains Using Specific Body Areas	68
7.1	Syndromes that VDU Operators are Typically Prone To	82

GLOSSARY

Anthropometry: the physical measurement of human beings both static and dynamic.

Biomechanics: the forces acting on the human musculoskeletal system through the combined effect of muscle action and gravity.

Bursitis: Bursae form over all areas where projecting parts of the body are in frictional contact with their surroundings, for example, the bunion. Bursitis at these sites leads to inflammation and swelling.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS): a nerve entrapment syndrome, where pressure on the median nerve in the front of the wrists results in recurrent pain in the palm and on the volar aspect of the wrists, with a corresponding weakness of the wrists and weakness of grip.

Epocondylitis: pulling or tearing of the tendinous insertion on the outside of the elbow. It is here that wrist extensor muscles attach to the bone and it may be a point of weakness when strong or rapid extensions of the wrist are required.

Ganglia: usually from the tendon sheaths around the wrist. They should often be taken as a indication of overuse, and usually signify tenosynovitis by may also occur in rheumatoid arthritis.

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD): this is a rare form of OOS, and can be seen as an extreme extension of Raynauds disease. RSD presents itself typically as an intense burning sensation and swelling.

Rotor Cuff Injuries (RCI): characterized by a painful arc when the arm is raised. Is typically caused while reaching up above the head to carry out a job, or lifting with the arm abducted.

Tendonitis: inflammation of a tendon, may occur when a tendon has been repeatedly used.

Tenosynovitis: inflammation of a tendon within a sheath, leading to pain, restriction of movement and sometimes a loss of ability to apply force. It occurs most commonly on the back of the wrist and on the radial side of the wrist, as in the thumb tendons.

Peritendinitis: inflammation of the muscle-tendon junction above the sheath, commonly occurring on the back of the forearm.