



## Employment and occupational outcomes of workers with musculoskeletal pain in a French region

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**OBJECTIVES:** To study the employment and occupational outcomes of workers who were diagnosed with upper limb musculoskeletal disorders (UL-MSDs) or had complained of upper limb musculoskeletal pain a few years before compared with workers who had no upper limb pain.

**METHODS:** In 2002-2005, an epidemiological surveillance system was set up. Occupational physicians examined 3710 randomly selected workers. It focused on six UL-MSDs: rotator cuff syndrome, lateral epicondylitis, flexor-extensor peritendinitis of the hands and fingers, de Quervain's disease, carpal tunnel syndrome and ulnar tunnel syndrome. Three groups were constituted: a 'UL-MSD' group (workers with a clinically diagnosed UL-MSD at baseline, 13% of the cohort); a 'PAIN' group (workers with pain in the previous 7 days at baseline and without any clinically diagnosed form, 38%); and a 'HEALTHY' group (workers with no disorder or upper limb pain in the previous 7 days, 49%). They completed a questionnaire between 2007 and 2009.

**RESULTS:** A total of 2332 responded. Fewer subjects were still in work in the 'UL-MSD' group (79.3%) than in the 'PAIN' (85.9%) and 'HEALTHY' (90.4%) groups, the difference remaining significant after adjusting for gender, age, occupational category, type of company and comorbidities. Of the subjects still in work, 24% had changed their work station in the same company in the 'PAIN' group compared with 19% in the 'HEALTHY' group and 21% in the 'UL-MSD' group.

**CONCLUSIONS:** This study showed the impact of musculoskeletal pain on employment outcome and the difficulty of keeping workers with musculoskeletal problems at work.

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