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Orthopaedic Section, OHSIG Literature Review #2
The Link between Obesity and Acute Traumatic Workplace Injuries

Ostbye, T., Dement, J. M., & Krause, K. M. (2007). Obesity and workers' compensation: results from the Duke Health and Safety Surveillance System. Archives of Internal Medicine, 167(8), 766.

Background: America's overweight and obesity epidemic has impacted many facets of public health. Literature has suggested a link between worker body mass index (BMI) and both work-related injuries and workers compensation costs. This large study by Ostbye et al. retrospectively analyzed worker demographics and work-related injury information for over eleven thousand employees.

Results: The study found a "linear relationship between BMI and rate of claims." Workers with a BMI greater than or equal to 40 were particularly susceptible to work-related injuries. Compared to their counterparts that were within recommended BMI norms, workers with BMIs greater than or equal to 40 experienced the following:

- Over twice as many workers comp claims
- More lost workdays (183.63 vs 14.19 lost workdays per 100 full-time employees)
- Higher medical claims costs ($51,091 vs $7,503 per 100 full-time employees)
- Higher indemnity claims costs ($59,178 vs $5,396 per 100 full-time employees)

Clinical Commentary: This study adds more evidence to the growing body of research that links worker overweight and obesity with increased injury rates, workers compensation costs, absenteeism, and many other adverse effects on workplace health and productivity. With health care costs comprising a significant portion of employer expenses, there is likely to be a continuing emphasis on strategies to improve workplace fitness.

Good Links: Check out http://www.apta.org/CSM/
OHSIG programming scheduled for Tuesday, February 4, 2014, 8am-1pm (Membership Meeting 12-1pm).