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Occupational Injuries Reported in a University Setting: A five year retrospective study (2017-2022)

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OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES REPORTED IN A CANADIAN UNIVERSITY SETTING

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

Occupational injuries occurring in university settings remain a major public health concern. A previous study by Jaskolka et al. (2009) examined the magnitude and nature of occupational injuries at the University of Windsor to establish areas of concern and develop appropriate intervention and prevention strategies. A recent follow up study was conducted to determine current trends relative to the previous analysis and use these results to update injury prevention priorities. Accident/injury reports submitted by university employees to the Health and Safety office between 2017 and 2022 were anonymized prior to analysis. Data for each reported incident were sorted into similar categories to the previous analysis to facilitate comparisons. The total number of reported accidents/injuries decreased by nearly 2.5 times (N = 848 vs. N = 347) since the initial analysis. Full-time female employees continued to report more injuries than males (63.4%), and the mean years of employment increased from 9.4 to 15.9. As before, upper extremity injuries were the most frequently injured body region (N = 117/347; 33.7%) and the most common mechanism of injury was slips/trips/falls (N = 90/347; 25.9% of all injuries). Acute soft tissue injuries remained as the most common type of injury (N = 185/347; 53.3%). Notably, employees in Food Services continued to report the most accidents/injuries compared to all other departments on campus. Although the results of the current and previous analyses were consistent in several ways, there were also notable differences, demonstrating the need for ongoing attention in this area. The notable decrease seen in the total number of injury reports was attributed to several key factors, including changes associated with the start of department outsourcing, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer reports resulted from the emergence of remote/flexible work and the concomitant

reduction in the number of employees working on campus who faced lower occupational hazard exposure.