

## Vibration Exposure

*R Cederlund et al. Disability and Rehabilitation. September (2001) Vol.23 #13 p 570.*

A study of the effect of vibration exposure on activities of daily living for people with or without a diagnosis of HAVS or VWF.

Vibration exposure may have an adverse effect on people with or without HAVS. The Labour Force Survey indicates that 1.2 million workers in the UK may be exposed to significant vibration and that up to 36,000 have a lasting disability as a result.

105 vibration exposed male workers took part. Inclusion criteria - no previously diagnosed vascular disease, diabetes, upper limb serious injury etc. Subjects were employed in a wide variety of trades.

Median age 43 median exposure 18 years.

24 were found to have HAVS, 81 were healthy but exposed (industrial group)

Activities of daily living (ADL) were assessed by a questionnaire adapted from studies of rheumatoid arthritis specifically for men.

27% of industrial group had some difficulty with ADL even though some of them had HAVS symptoms (previously undiagnosed).

Work in the cold and, fine manipulation were both affected in the vibration exposed group, even in the undiagnosed.

On the other hand, some cases with HAVS symptoms had no difficulty with ADL.

### Comment

The suggestion here is therefore that ADL tests be used as part of the early diagnosis of HAVS. However the results presented here suggest the specificity of such a test would seem to be very low. Adoption of a precautionary approach would tend to suggest that work adaptations would be necessary where vibration exposure and reduced ADL were coincident.

The authors correctly report that as HAVS is progressive, and suggest this might explain why the otherwise symptomless, report difficulties with ADL. If a link is believed to be indicative of future diagnosis there may be scope for claims based on the prospect of diagnosable harm.

Diagnosis does not directly correlate with impairment or disability, individual assessment is required for compensation purposes.

The discovery of impairment/disability in the absence of diagnosis may prove challenging to insurers.

