

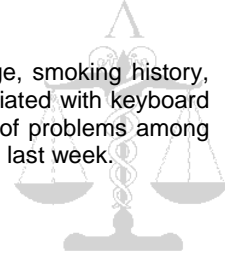
KT Palmer et al. Occupational Med. (2001) Vol. 51 p. 392.

A population study of 21,201 adults randomly selected from GP roles across the UK. The aim was to establish risk factors for upper limb symptoms.

12, 262 (58%) responses were received, reporting on pain, tiredness, stress, smoking status, type of work and sensory symptoms.

Regular use of keyboards was defined as > 4 hours a day.

Prevalence of symptoms was related to keyboard use even after correction for age, smoking history, headaches and stress. Shoulder pain and wrist/hand pains were significantly associated with keyboard use. Prevalence ratios were of the order of 1.4 (95% CI = 1.1 to 1.7). Prevalence of problems among women was higher than among men (>30% higher) typically 10% had pain within the last week.



Comment

The role of such pains in the natural history of DRSI is still speculative but popularly accepted, however, the rate of conversion from pain to DRSI is not known, though probably very small. Duration of pain is thought to contribute to the risk of developing a chronic pain condition.

Pain is not an injury.

The result shows keyboard use to be relatively benign, when compared with some studies that were more selective/vulnerable to non injury influences. Even so, work with keyboards is consistently associated with discomfort and perhaps this alone is reason enough to address potential preventative interventions.

A prevalence ratio of 1.4 is not sufficient on its own to establish causation on the balance of probabilities.
