

*GAM Ariens et al. Spine. September (2001) Vol. 26 #17 p 1896.*

A study of psychosocial risk factors and neck pain at work.

Links between stress and musculoskeletal disorders are being made with some conviction. However, many studies do not accurately measure stress and many tend to use pain as a surrogate variable for diagnosable injury. Such studies are of little real value.

The study reported here was unusually well designed.

Very briefly, the study was a 3-year prospective study of 1334 workers located at 34 different sites.

Stress was measured according to Karasek's demand, control, support model. Neck pain was recorded as significant if it lasted more than one day.

Significant associations between neck pain and psychosocial variables were:

High Job demands RR = 2.14 (95% CI = 1.28 to 3.58) Low Co worker support RR = 2.43 (95% CI = 1.11 to 5.29)

- Skills discretion
- Decision authority
- Supervisor support
- Conflicting Job Demands
- Job security

Were not related to neck pain even though they would be expected to relate to stress.

#### Comment

If there were a link between stress and neck pain at work, it would seem that only two aspects of stress were relevant.

Karasek's demand, control, support model may well prove predictive for high blood pressure but, so it seems, the more appropriate model for neck pain would be a demand, social support model.

Links between neck pain and diagnosable neck injury have proved to be inefficient. So long as diagnosable injury is required for compensation claims, it would seem this research does not provide a ready justification for a claim linking aspects of stress, to a physical injury.

