

Workers make fewer claims for psychological illnesses

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Research has found that Australian workers are significantly less likely to claim GP visits for psychological illnesses on workers' compensation than they are for physical work-related injuries like musculoskeletal disorders.

The study was conducted by researchers at the Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research (ISCRR), a joint venture between Monash University, WorkSafe Victoria and the Transport Accident Commission, and the University of Sydney.

It examined 486,400 [general practitioner](#) (GP) consultations around Australia recorded in the BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) research program between April 2004 and March 2009.

In these consultations, the doctor recorded whether the patient's health problem was work-related and whether the visit was being claimed through [workers'](#) compensation.

ISCRR's Chief Research Officer, Dr Alex Collie, who conceived the research, said that over 22 per cent of workers didn't make compensation claims even though their GP had determined that the illness was work-related.

"There are a number of reasons we are seeing work-related conditions not being claimed," Dr Collie said.

"It could be that workers are less willing to claim for [psychological conditions](#) compared with physical conditions because of potential for stigma in the workplace. Workers' may also be unaware they can make a workers' compensation claim."

The findings also suggest that the decision to make a compensation claim may be influenced by a worker's jurisdiction.

Claims were much more likely to be made in major cities and inner regional areas compared with outer regional and very remote regions, with 39 per cent of work-related GP consultations not claimed in remote regions compared with 23 per cent in major cities.

Dr Helena Britt from the Family Medicine Research Centre at the University of Sydney said this was one of the first investigations into the nature of GP treated occupational health problems that are claimed and not claimed through workers' compensation.

"Assessment and management of work-related health problems are an important part of a GP's role. The BEACH dataset we used allows us to analyse the wide range of problems that GPs judge to be work related," Dr Britt said.

"It's a very unique dataset and the only one like it that exists in the world."

Dr Collie said this research is very useful in understanding the burden of work-related injury in general practice settings, and more specifically the type and amount of work-related injury and disease that is not claimed on [workers compensation](#) systems.

More information: This article was published in the online [International Journal of Social Security and Workers Compensation](#).

Provided by Monash University

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