A telephone follow-up study on determinant factors of return-to-work (RTW) among injured workers after musculoskeletal injury for 2 years

Chan SMV1, Au LYF1, Hung LK2
1 Occupational Therapy Department, Prince of Wales Hospital 2 Department of Orthopaedics & Traumatology, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Keywords:
musculoskeletal injury
telephone follow up
determinant factors
return-to-work
injured workers

Introduction
Return-to-work (RTW) was a dynamic and multi-factorial process. Aligned with the mainstream of biomedical model in Hong Kong, medical practitioner and injured workers mainly focused on treating clinical symptoms. In our clinical practice, we had found that some of the patients still had not RTW successfully after completing the vocational rehabilitation. Also, there was an increased focus on the importance of individual, workplace, economic and social factors which were valuable in giving us information to identify injured workers prone to RTW. However, in Hong Kong, there was a lack of evidence and inadequate support on determinant factors for identifying people at risk of work disability.

Objectives
This study was to investigate and explore the important determinant factors affecting RTW among injured workers after musculoskeletal injuries in a regional hospital. So we will enhance our service effectiveness in work rehabilitation by problem-specific treatment

Methodology
This was a cross-sectional study with self-developed questionnaire for telephone interview in order to collect different kinds of determinant factors including the socio-demographic, work-related and health-related variables for RTW. Subjects with work injuries who were completing the vocational rehabilitation during 2011-2012 in
Occupational Therapy Department were recruited. Pearson Chi-Square Test which was used to test for significant proportion changes for RTW with various categorical independent variables. Pearson’s and Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient was applied to associate with RTW among determinant factors for continuous and categorical variables respectively. Finally, Binary Logistic Regression was used to assess and predict the impact of a set of determinant factors on RTW.

**Result**

There was a total of 287 subjects that could meet the inclusion criteria with available clinical data for recruitment of telephone interview. The response rate was 71%. A total of 204 subjects were recruited for data analysis. There was 127 (62.3%) out of 204 subjects had RTW. Logistic Regression results showed that 3 determinant factors including the requirement of regular medication (p=0.000) which was about 6.2 times, occupational group (p=0.035) about 3.5 times and types of working hours (p=0.035) about 2.4 times, were more likely to affect and predict injured workers for RTW than their counterparts. This was a first explorative study investigating the determinants influencing the injured workers for RTW in the Occupational Therapy Department in Prince of Wales Hospital. Regarding to vocational rehabilitation, it was important to give extra support & address the special need of injured workers in my clinical practice. Further research was suggested to determine the applicability of these results and broader the sample size for outcome generalization.