

EFFECT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND LONG-TERM DISABILITY AFTER ROAD TRAFFIC CRASH: RESULTS FROM THE UQ SUPPORT STUDY

Authors:

Kenardy J, Heron-Delaney M, Warren J, Brown EA

Publisher:

(2015) *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 96(3): 410-417.

What was the study about?

This study explored the health outcomes of people who had made a claim related to a minor injury following a road traffic accident

What did the study find?

People who have made a claim for minor injuries resulting from a road traffic accident in QLD report relatively high levels of disability up to 24 months following injury. This is particularly so if they are also experiencing mental health issues, such as PTSD or depression or general anxiety, or if their pain is still high and their expectations to return to work is low.

Why is this interesting or important?

Past research in this area has mainly focused on factors affecting recovery for people with severe injuries. This is likely due to the fact that it has been assumed that people with minor injuries will recover to normal or pre-accident health quite quickly – however this research suggests that this is not the case.

How was the study done?

Health outcomes for minor injury claimants were assessed in three waves using a range of validated surveys. A positive aspect of the research method is that it has followed people over time – other studies have mainly only looked at one time frame – and the number of people that were followed-up was high, indicating it was a good quality study.

What does this mean for practice?

This means that compensation and insurance agencies could potentially assess people early for risk of poor recovery even if their injuries are only minor. Based on this study and other assessments for risk of poor recovery would need to consider whether the person is experiencing high pain, mental health issues and poor expectations for returning to work. It also suggests that initial treatments for people with minor injuries should be broader than just a physical focus, and that a focus on mental health issues and pain management may help people experience improved recovery outcomes.

Link: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0003999314011757>