

Functional limitations in workers with hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS)

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The issue: The impact of HAVS on daily functioning and quality of life

We know that workers exposed to hand-transmitted vibration can develop a chronic occupational disease termed hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS). While our ability to diagnose HAVS has progressed well, **little is known about the impact of HAVS on a worker's daily life.**

This study characterizes reported impacts to add to our **understanding of the multifaceted social and psychological ramifications** of this serious disability.

This knowledge is important to assist health care providers and their patients **to maximize functional abilities and ultimately quality of life.**

The study:

A **retrospective chart review** was undertaken of 107 workers diagnosed with HAVS at an occupational medicine clinic. Prior to their clinical assessment workers completed an open-ended **questionnaire** regarding activities they were having difficulty performing in the **domains of personal care, household activities and recreational activities and hobbies.**

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Study results:

- 105 of the patients were male. 54% were over the age of 50 years and 46% between 25 and 50.
- Activities reported as difficult to carry out included in order of frequency dressing, lawn maintenance, fishing or ice fishing, snow removal, washing the car and doing the dishes.
- The number of activities reported did not differ between younger and older workers.
- These limitations span the range of tasks required for independent adult living and underpin quality of life.

Implications:

- There adds to a growing body of research exploring the consequences of HAVS from the patients' perspective, including:
 - Physical manifestations
 - Reduced physical and mental quality of life and impact on everyday activities
 - Psychological ramifications
 - This study adds an emphasis on the cold-related impairment for outdoor activities such as ice fishing or household activities such as snow removal. This is important for workers living in predominantly rural and northern areas.
 - A new tool to address the impact of HAVS on a worker's life is currently being tested.

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