Under-reporting of Workplace Injuries: Who Pays?

Friday, March 28, 2003 – Workers' compensation is a no-fault insurance system covering injuries in the workplace. It is paid for by employers and is intended to provide some compensation for loss of wages due to injury, plus reimbursement of medical costs.

Data on the level of claims for workers' compensation is often taken as a measure of the safety performance of a workplace, or used for purposes of comparison between industries or jurisdictions.

However, a variety of studies point to significant under-reporting of workplace injuries and a similar failure to claim workers' compensation, despite eligibility. Such findings suggest caution in the use of workers' compensation statistics as measures of safety performance.

What's more, under-reporting of workplace injuries to the workers' compensation system indicates that the burden of medical care is being shifted from employers to taxpayers. This is so, since treatment is covered, instead, by the publicly funded health care system.

CPRN Work Network Research Associate, Graham Lowe, at the University of Alberta, and co-author, Harry Shannon of McMaster University, have written a paper on the Canadians' experience regarding workers' compensation claims. ***How Many Injured Workers Do Not File Claims for Workers' Compensation Benefits?*** was originally published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* (#42, December 2002).

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