

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article:

COVID-19, long-COVID and return-to-work: the experience of Italian occupational physicians on musculoskeletal symptoms and occupational ergonomic risks / Modenese, Alberto; Gobba, Fabriziomaria. - (2023). (Intervento presentato al convegno PREMUS, WDPI, & MYOPAIN 2023 International Scientific Conference tenutosi a Bengaluru (India) nel 20-26 september 2023).

Terms of use:

The terms and conditions for the reuse of this version of the manuscript are specified in the publishing policy. For all terms of use and more information see the publisher's website.

11/05/2024 12:47

Abstract

Title

COVID-19, LONG-COVID AND RETURN-TO-WORK: THE EXPERIENCE OF ITALIAN OCCUPATIONAL PHYSICIANS ON MUSCULOSKELETAL SYMPTOMS AND OCCUPATIONAL ERGONOMIC RISKS

Authors:

Dr. Alberto Modenese, Prof. Fabriziomaria Gobba

Chair of Occupational Medicine, Department of Biomedical, Metabolic and Neural Sciences, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Address: via Giuseppe Campi 287, 41125 Modena (Italy)

Contact: alberto.modenese@unimore.it; tel. +39 059 2055475

INTRODUCTION

Musculoskeletal symptoms are among the recognized health complaints reported by subjects affected by Long COVID (1). Furthermore, return-to-work (RTW) after COVID-19 can be a specific issue in case of occupational exposure to ergonomic risk factors (2).

METHODS

A questionnaire-based investigation has been performed in a pilot group of Occupational Physicians (OPs) from an Italian region, to collect data on Long-COVID and COVID-19-related RTW issues of workers included in health surveillance programs (3).

RESULTS

All the OPs (n=13) reported of having examined workers with possible Long-COVID symptoms. The 54% of them believes that Long-COVID is still a frequent issue for the workers (as of March 2023), even if less severe compared to the initial stages of the pandemic. The questionnaire investigates 23 Long-COVID symptoms, asking the OPs to indicate the most frequent among the workers they follow, and then the most relevant (frequency+severity): the 62 and the 39% of the OPs indicated "asthenia", respectively as the most frequent and the most relevant. Only one of the OPs reported joints and/or musculoskeletal pains as the most relevant symptom. Considering RTW issues, the 62% of the OPs reported that the main problems were related to conditions of frailty of the workers with respect to the COVID-19 risk. OPs revealed that almost all the workers they examined were fit to work, but in the 77% of the cases they needed to indicate specific limitations related to the job activity: in the majority (=46%) of the cases these limitations were related to the manual handling of heavy loads.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the direct experience of OPs involved in occupational health surveillance programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, this pilot survey shows that asthenia is the most frequent Long-COVID symptom for workers, while only the 7% of the OPs reported joints/musculoskeletal complaints as the most relevant Long-COVID symptom. The main occupational risk posing issues when evaluating the RTW of the workers was that of the manual handling of heavy loads, indicated by the 46% of the OPs.

REFERENCES

1. Pires et al. JBJS Rev. 2022;10(6). Doi:10.2106/JBJS.RVW.22.00013.
2. Mendola et al. Med Lav. 2022;113(5):e2022040. Doi:10.23749/mdl.v113i5.13377.
3. Modenese and Gobba. Occup Environ Med. 2023;80:A41. Doi:10.1136/OEM-2023-EPICOH.98