

Supplementary Information on Occupational Injuries to Hands and Arms sought by the LegCo Manpower Panel at its meeting on 15 February 2001

1. Occupations of patients

The number of confirmed cases of tenosynovitis and strain injuries involving manual labour or frequent or repeated movements of the hand or forearm were 71 and 55 for year 1998 and 1999 respectively. The majority of the patients suffered from tenosynovitis and strain injuries were seen at the two occupational health clinics operated by the Labour Department. A few cases were referred to the Occupational Health Service for investigation through notices submitted by the employers (Form 2/2A) and were not seen at the occupational health clinics. The detailed breakdown of occupations of patients confirmed to have tenosynovitis and strain injuries in 1998-1999 is listed in the Appendix.

2. Upper limb disorders seen in occupational health clinics

Diseases encountered in the occupational health clinics can generally be divided into three main groups, namely, occupational diseases, work-related diseases and general diseases.

Occupational diseases occur exclusively among workers exposed to specific hazards. They are cause specific and exposure at workplace is essential and are therefore compensable. Work-related diseases are diseases in which exposure at workplace may be one of the many factors associated in their occurrence but need not be a risk factor in each case. They are frequently seen in the community. As they are not cause specific, they are not compensable. General diseases are diseases which occur in the general community and are not caused by work.

In respect of upper limb disorders, tenosynovitis and strain injuries involving manual labour, or frequent or repeated movements of the hand or forearm are categorised as occupational diseases and are

therefore compensable under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance. Musculoskeletal disorders without manual labour, or frequent or repeated movement of the hand or forearm are work-related diseases. They are multifactorial in origin, and are therefore not compensable. Upper limb problems such as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis are common diseases occurring in the general community. They are unrelated to work and therefore not compensable.

New patients who suffered from upper limb disorders attending the two occupational health clinics in 1998-1999 was tabled below:-

	1998	1999
(a) Total no. of new cases attended by the two clinics	951	2422*
(b) Total no. of new cases with upper limb disorders out of (a)	182 (19%)	687 (28%)
(i) Cases of tenosynovitis and strain injury involving manual labour, or frequent or repeated movements of the hand or forearm (occupational diseases)	39	66**
(ii) Cases of upper limb musculo-skeletal disorder without manual labour, or frequent or repeated movements of the hand or forearm (work-related diseases)	124	499
(iii) Upper limb problems unrelated to work (general diseases)	19	122

* The second occupational health clinic commenced operation in May 1999. Therefore, more patients were seen in 1999.

** Some tenosynovitis cases were first seen in 1999 and investigated and confirmed in 2000.

Statistics of Cases of Tenosynovitis and Strain Injuries by Occupation in 1998-1999

Occupation	1998	1999	Total
Engineers/Technicians: electrical & electronics	1	0	1
Engineers/Technicians: mechanical engineering	1	1	2
Draughtsmen	0	1	1
Allied medical services personnel	5	2	7
Accountants	0	3	3
Managers	1	0	1
Stenographers, typists, secretaries	2	2	4
Bookkeepers, cashiers, etc.	2	2	4
Computing machine operators	1	1	2
Mail distribution personnel	2	2	4
Telephone & telegraph operators	0	1	1
General clerical & related personnel	1	6	7
General salesmen & shop assistants	3	0	3
Managers in Catering & lodging	1	0	1
Housekeeping services personnel	0	1	1
Cooks	10	6	16
Waiters, bartenders, etc.	2	1	3
Maids & related housekeeping service	1	1	2
Building caretakers, charworkers, cleaners	10	2	12
Hairdressers, barbers, beauticians, etc.	0	1	1
Protective service personnel	0	1	1
General service personnel	0	2	2
Production supervisors & general foremen	0	1	1
Metal processors	2	0	2
Spinners, weavers, knitters, dyers, etc.	1	3	4
Butchers & meat preparers	0	2	2
Bakers, pastrycooks & confectionery makers	0	1	1
General food & beverage processors	4	1	5
Tailors, dressmakers, sewers, upholsterers	6	2	8
Electrical & electronics personnel	4	0	4
Plumbers, welders, sheet metal, structural metal preparers & erectors	1	1	2
Printing and related personnel	1	0	1
Other productional and related workers	0	2	2
Bricklayers, carpenters & other construction workers	4	4	8
Transport equipment operator	1	0	1
General labourer	4	2	6
Total	71	55	126

Note: The classification of occupations in the above table is adopted from the ISCO-68 of "International Standard Classification of Occupations" published by the International Labour Office.