

Occupational Hand Problems

During the economic recession, working overtime is a common phenomenon and it directly increases the risk of occupational diseases. In view of this, Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong (HKU), has performed a series of related research.

Firstly, the researchers have examined a total of 2,982 cases of acute hand injuries in 1998-2001. Over 30% of the acute injuries occurred during work. Serious hand injury like digit amputation, limb amputation, multiple tissue injuries like bone and soft tissue trauma occurred frequently in construction site and in saw injuries.

Besides, non-manual work is also found to be a cause leading to work-related disorder. Prolonged use of computer, working in a seated posture, lack of exercise often lead to tissue overload and degeneration. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is one of the most common diseases in the hand and aggravated by occupation. It is estimated that there are about 4,000 – 6,000 new cases in HK annually.

In view of this, the Department has conducted another study on wrist posture, loading and repetitive motion as risk factors for developing CTS. The research findings revealed that when conducting daily activities including work and housework, frequent flexion would increase the risk of CTS by 4 times while frequent extension and sustained force of the wrist would increase the risk of CTS by 2.5 times.