

Work-related accidents and occupational diseases in veterinarians and their staff

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Views

Abstract

Objectives: We assessed the occupational hazards in veterinary practice by analysing accident insurance data in order to stimulate strategies to prevent occupational accidents and diseases in veterinarians and their staff. **Methods:** Approximately 10,000 veterinary practices comprising about 27,500 veterinarians and their staff are covered by the Institution of Statutory Accident Insurance of the Health and Welfare Service (BGW). Each year about 2,000 accident and occupational disease claims are filed by these veterinarians and their staff. The claims for the 5-year period from 1998 to 2002 are analysed in this paper. **Results:** For 2002, the incidence rate for accidents in the workplace was 105.4 per 1,000 full-time workers, a rate 2.9-times higher than for general practitioners of human medicine. When only severe accidents resulting in a loss of work time of more than 3 days were analysed, the relative risk increased to 9.2. Approximately 66% of the reported accidents are due to scratches, bites, or kicks from animals. Claims of occupational disease are filed 2.7-times more often by veterinarians and their staff than by general practitioners and their staff. The occupational diseases filed most

often concern the skin (39%), followed by allergic respiratory diseases (30.5%), and infectious diseases (19.1%). *Conclusions:* Prevention strategies for veterinarians should focus on accidents caused by animals. The prevention of occupational diseases should focus on skin diseases, respiratory disease, and infections.

Keywords

Veterinary practice Accident Occupational disease Skin disease Respiratory disease

Dedicated to Prof. Jürgen Berger, Department of Biostatistics, University Hospital Eppendorf, emeritus in 2004

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