

Sickness Absences due to Diagnosed Voice Disorders in Teachers

Results from the Finnish Public Sector (FPS) Study

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Introduction

- Teachers often experience voice problems.
- Voice disorders are significantly associated with work ability.
- Most research has relied on self-assessment and cross-sectional data.

Aim

To study the association between new diagnosed functional voice disorder and work ability.

Research Questions

1. What is the incidence of new functional voice disorders?
2. Does work ability change over time?
3. Is there an association between the incidence of voice disorders and changes in work ability?

Methods

Data linked from 2001 to 2016:

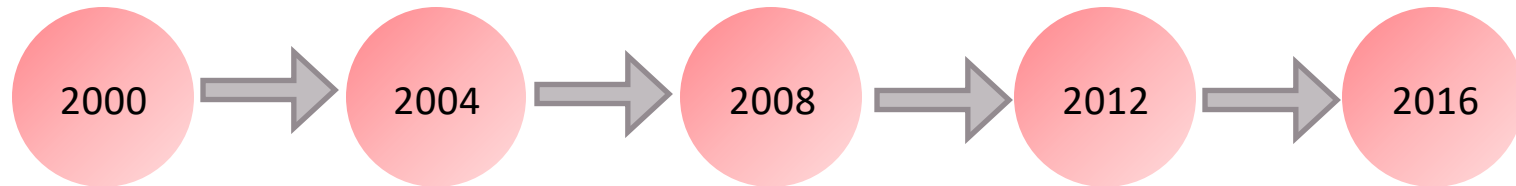
- the Finnish Public Sector (FPS) Study
 - work ability score
- National patient registry and sickness absence registry
 - R49 (voice disturbances excl. F44.4, psych. voice disturb.)
 - R49.0 (dysphonia)
 - R49.1 (aphonia)
 - R49.2 (hypernasality and hyponasality)
 - R49.8 (other and unspecified voice disturbances)
- Employer records including sex and age

Main Variables

- New periods of sick leave due to five diagnosed functional voice disorders
- Work ability

Timeline

Baseline



The end of the study

- Four evaluation periods for sick leave
- Five measurement points for work ability

Sample

- 3,060 teachers
- No previous voice disorder diagnoses in 2000
- Females 76.1% / Males 23.9%
- Age mean 42.9 years
- Smoking 24.1%

Results



- Up to [redacted] new sick leave periods due to diagnosed voice disorders (in 2013-2016)
- All sick leaves: Short-term absences increased significantly, while long-term absences slightly decreased.

Results



- A slight but significant decrease in work ability
- No possibilities to evaluate the cause-effect relationships.

Discussion

- Low incidence of diagnosed functional voice disorder
 - Potential underdiagnosis
 - Treatment seeking
- Work ability decreased
 - Trends for sickness absences
- No possibilities to evaluate the cause-effect relationships nor the effects of background variables

Implications

- More accurate and systematic national monitoring of voice disorders
- Future research: Cost evaluation
- Workplace responsibility

Conclusions

- Low incidence of diagnosed functional voice disorders
- Work ability decreased
- The causality remains unclear
- Better diagnostic practices
- Encourage employees to seek medical evaluation for voice problems.
- Employer responsibility

Thank You!