

Impact of COVID-19 on Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Among Nursing Care Facility Workers: Analysis of California Workers' Compensation Data, 2019-2021

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Objective/Issue

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected health care workers both physically and psychologically by increasing their workloads and stress. This may also have increased their risk of occupational injuries, but there has been limited research. This study analyzed workers' compensation (WC) claims among California nursing care facility workers during 2019-2021 to assess the impact of the pandemic on occupational injury risk.

Design/Methods

This study used data from the California Workers' Compensation Information System. WC claims in pre- and post-pandemic periods were described and compared between nursing facilities and other settings. Nursing facility cases were described by demographic, job, and injury characteristics.

Results/Findings

In 2019-2021, 46,561 claims were identified as nursing facility cases in California. The annual counts increased by 64.4% from 2019 to 2020 and then in 2021, decreased to a level similar to pre-COVID. In contrast, non-healthcare settings had decreases of claims during the pandemic. COVID-related claims accounted for 50.1% of claims in 2020-2021 in nursing facilities; this proportion was much higher compared to other healthcare (35.4%) or non-healthcare settings (14.3%). Non-COVID claims decreased during the pandemic, but mental disorder or stress claims increased in nursing facilities, particularly in 2020 (+25.0%).

Conclusions/Discussion

Our findings show that nursing facilities were more impacted by the pandemic than other settings. We did not find evidence of an increased risk of occupational injuries during the pandemic, except for stress or mental disorders. Our findings indicate a clear need to address psychological stress and mental health during a pandemic among nursing facility workers.

Key Words

COVID, pandemic, long-term care, nursing care facilities, occupational injury