

ESJ: Expert comment on number and cost of claims linked to minor cervical trauma

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This study by B. Soltermann et al. on number and cost of claims linked to minor cervical trauma in Europe provides new and important information regarding incidence as well as expenditure for this kind of injury in ten European countries, which makes this study unique. Many, but not all, countries in Europe have reported an increase of claims frequency related to this type of injury, an increase which has been difficult to explain on the basis of, for example, accident related or biomechanical factors. The most remarkable finding in this study is the 25 times higher percentage of minor cervical spine injury in Great Britain compared to France when evaluating minor cervical spine injury as a proportion of all bodily injuries. This interesting and thought provoking finding actually seems to represent an even larger difference in absolute numbers when taking into account the higher incidence of bodily injuries in Great Britain as compared to in France. The authors also provide very interesting information that leads to speculations that cultural setting as well as sensitivity of awareness of the problem in a broader sense could be considered as playing important roles in the legal and medical management of minor cervical injury. Furthermore, the study shows large

differences between German-speaking and French- or Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland. The study also highlights remarkable differences in expenditure per claim. In this regard Switzerland has the highest expenditure per claim at an average cost of €35,000 compared to the European average of €9,000.

This extensive and very interesting study provides new information regarding minor cervical trauma in ten European countries. The pronounced differences between various countries in terms of incidence and expenditure of claims due to such trauma reflect differences in cultural attitudes as well as medical approaches. The findings also emphasize problems in making an adequate diagnosis for patients who have sustained minor cervical trauma. One may also conclude that the findings in this study indicate the need for further research in this field which involves large groups of patients. Moreover, these injuries lead to considerable costs for both individuals and the society at large. The authors should be congratulated on undertaking such a comprehensive study that provides new insight into the complex field of minor cervical trauma

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