



Underreporting of Injuries is Greater among Black Healthcare Workers Compared to White Healthcare Workers Findings from the Center's Boston Hospital Workers Health Study

Total Worker Health Implications

Underreporting of occupational injuries is well documented, posing a challenge to appropriately comparing safety performance, and potentially obscuring health disparities among vulnerable groups of workers.

- Patient-care workers are frequently exposed to injuries from sharp medical devices, which can involve the risk of serious illnesses.
- Substantial numbers of injuries are not included in employer injury records, which can compromise prevention efforts.
- More attention needs to be paid to racial disparities, both in reporting and in injury rates, so better approaches to prevention can be identified.

Data Collected

Patient-care nurses and aides at two large hospitals in Boston completed surveys; the survey data were linked to employee injury records from employers.

- One study examined if there were discrepancies on injury reporting.
- A second study assessed racial and ethnic disparities in injury reporting.

Full Publications

Sabbath EL, Boden LI, Williams JA, Hashimoto D, Hopcia K, Sorensen G. Obscured by administrative data? Racial disparities in occupational injury. *Stand J Work Environ Health*. 2017 Mar 1; 43(2):155-162. doi: 10.5271/sjweh.3611.

Boden, L. I., Petrofsky, Y.V., Hopcia, K., Wagner, G.R., & Hashimoto, D. Understanding the Hospital Sharps Injury Reporting Pathway. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 2015 Mar;58(3), 282-289. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.22392>.

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Study Findings

Measuring injury rates using only administrative records does not necessarily provide a complete picture of the actual number of injuries occurring at the workplace.

- Self-reports and administrative data showed differences in injury rates suggesting that not all injuries are recorded.
- The undercount of occupational injuries in administrative data may be greater among black compared to white workers, leading to underestimates of racial disparities in workplace injury.
- Evidence of injury reporting emphasizes the need to improve reporting mechanisms and take steps to understand how incidents might be lost before they are recorded.