

Minnesota Veterinary Technician's Study

Purpose of the Study

There are approximately 53,000 Veterinary Technicians nationwide who are at potential risk of traumatic occupational injuries (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012); these can be costly in terms of medical expenses, lost time from work, or loss of a career due to disability. A limited number of studies have found that the greatest number of injuries to Veterinarians is due to animal bites and other animal-induced trauma, needle sticks, and ergonomic injuries (Hill, 1998; Poole, 1999; Gabel, 2002). The work environment of Veterinary Technicians places them at risk of similar injuries (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012); however, the tasks performed by Veterinary Technicians differ from Veterinarians in scope and frequency. Developing appropriate injury prevention and control measures requires a better understanding of the risks specific to Veterinary Technicians. The findings from this study will provide a foundation for future research and efforts to control these injuries.

The *objective of this study* was to characterize the injury experiences of Certified Veterinary Technicians to identify various types of injuries and resulting consequences. Through a follow-up case-control survey, the risk/protective factors associated with animal bites, based on relevant exposures, can be identified.

Research and Design Methods

For the first phase of the study, a questionnaire was sent to a cohort of all Veterinary Technicians, certified in the state of Minnesota in 2004, to identify those who worked during the past 12 months and their experience of work-related injuries. The list of Certified Veterinary Technicians was made available from the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association. Analyses of data collected from the first questionnaire was used 1) to determine the rates and consequences of injuries, and 2) to identify potential risk/protective factors for injuries, in general. In the second phase of the study (case-control), a questionnaire was sent to those who experienced specific animal bite injuries, as well as to a random sample of those who did not. Specific risks, as well as protective factors, for bite injuries were identified by comparing several Veterinary Technician-related characteristics and environmental exposures between the groups. From the analyses of this effort, more realistic prevention and control strategies can be developed.

References

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