

## **A Debiasing Checklist Has the Potential to Make Care of People in a Work Claim more Efficient and Effective**

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**INTRODUCTION:** Claims of work injury are frequently misapplied to degenerative and idiopathic pathophysiology. And work restrictions are often based on incapability (the experience of being unwell) rather than risk and incapacity (aspects of pathophysiology). We developed a debiasing checklist to help clinicians who assess people for a potential work injury apply the most appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and restrictions. We applied the checklist to a set of work claims that came to peer review, asking: What are the most frequent deviations from the checklist? And, are there any factors associated with the number of deviations from a work claim check list among peer reviewed work claims?

**METHODS:** A checklist was developed to catch common pitfalls of a work claim based on extensive experience reviewing work injury claims combined with experimental evidence. We retrospectively reviewed 141 work claims sent to a musculoskeletal specialist for peer review, and collected patient (gender, age, occupation, mechanism of injury, onset) and clinician (care unit, gender, training) data from the records. We counted the instances of deviations from the checklist on both specific items and within groups of items.

**RESULTS:** Ninety-one percent of work claims failed to notice signs of pain avoidance and unhelpful thinking, 90% documented active range of motion as the motion the patient could do until pain was felt instead of the patient's actual capability, and 91% placed unnecessary work restrictions on patients based on their perception of incapability. There were no associations between patient and clinician characteristics and the number of deviations from the checklist.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:** The observation that a debiasing checklist identified that claims of work injury are frequently misapplied to degenerative and idiopathic pathophysiology, and work restrictions are often inappropriate, demonstrates the potential for a checklist to contribute to accurate diagnosis, treatment, and appropriate work restrictions.