## Work related factors that can double the risk of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

#### Carpal Tunnel Syndrome – risk factors

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is an example of an Upper Limb Disorder (ULD). Risk factors for the development of CTS include repetitive forceful work and exposure to hand arm vibration.



There is a strong association where a combination of risk factors exist (i.e. force, repetition and posture). The risk of developing CTS is not confined to people in a single industry or job, but is more reported in those performing tasks such as working on an assembly line.

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Poor working environments, poor work organisation (including workload, job demands and lack of breaks) and individual susceptibility also influence the risk that someone will develop CTS.

### Doubling of risk of injury in compensation claims

### We frequently provide evidence in civil compensation claims for occupational disease.

Often, the legal burden of proof may be that a claimant must prove that their injury is more likely than not to have been sustained due to work related causes (as apposed to other potential causes). Put another way, the claimant must show that the occupational risk factors to which they were exposed doubled the risk that the condition would develop.



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### The cause of any person's injury is for medical expertise and the Courts.

However, specialist advice is often required in assessing the occupational risks and considering whether the risk has been doubled.

### Doubling of risk of CTS due to occupation

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is a Government body that considers when occupational factors double the risk of injury. In 2006, IIAC considered prescription of CTS and concluded that the risk was doubled if:

- The work involved repeated palmar flexion and dorsiflexion of the wrist, with a cycle time for repetition of 30 seconds or less, and;
- The work was undertaken for at least 20 hours per week, and;
- The work was undertaken for at least 12 months in aggregate, in the 24 months prior to onset of symptoms.



The IIAC observed that presentation to medical attention would normally occur within 6 months of leaving employment. The IIAC also consider that the use of powered hand held tools that transmit vibration to the hand doubles the risk of CTS.

We can assist in considering whether work activities fulfil the IIAC criteria.

To speak to one of Pragma's experts in assessment of upper limb disorder risks, please contact our Business Coordinator, Laura Hooper:

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