



Occupational Health Centres de santé
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Back Injury Prevention for Paramedics

Back injuries are a major problem for Paramedics since they are often required to lift in awkward situations where the proper application of body mechanics is difficult to obtain. This less than ideal environment, where speed is a factor due to the patient's medical crisis, places Paramedics at an increased risk for back strain and possible injury. Risk factors for injury include high muscular forces, awkward lifting and body postures, and repetitively lifting patients, stretchers and medical bags. Due to these risk factors, very few Paramedics are capable of retiring in their field. Many Paramedics move into management or change careers entirely due to injuries that primarily affect the back.

OHCOW Sudbury, in partnership with Greater Sudbury EMS, is developing a specialized program for EMS workers that is designed to prevent back injuries. The program, entitled "Preventing back injuries in Paramedics: how to lift in a worst case scenario..." sets out to help prevent back injuries in Paramedics. To accomplish this goal, the program provides knowledge of the biomechanics of lifting and proper lifting procedures for both ideal situations and difficult, Paramedic specific situations. The program is broken into separate modules addressing different areas of back care. These modules will consist of both a written booklet and an audio visual presentation outlining key aspects of the scientific literature and prevention strategies.

As a Kinesiology student, helping to develop the EMS back care program has been both challenging and rewarding. The diversity of the working environment and duties performed by Paramedics has made developing a back care program quite a challenge. In addition, background literature on back injuries in Paramedics offers no specific solutions to this problem. It is very rewarding to be able to apply the concepts of Anatomy, Physiology, Biomechanics, and Ergonomics to help develop a back injury prevention program, specific to Paramedics.

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