

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)



Clinical Case: Vocal Nodule

Cheryl Rook
Occupational Health Nurse

History

- **female teacher**
- **14 years full time, with additional curriculum outside of class time**
- **Symptoms begin with a hoarse throat, inability to talk, losing a day here and there**
- **Symptoms improve on the weekend, worse at work**
- **ENT Dx: L vocal cord nodule with a statement it is work related from excessive talking**
- **WSIB claim denied at operations level ‘medical compatibility between diagnosis and job duties’**
- **Teacher accommodated with an FM system/clip on microphones with speakers in classroom**



OHCOW's Contribution

- OHCOW Medical history rules out other non work related possible contributing factors
- WSIAT review: 2 cases allowed, 2 not allowed
- Review of the medical scientific literature undertaken

Literature Highlights

- Systematic review concluded teachers have a significantly increased risk of voice disorders
- Higher incidence in women - 3x more lesions in women vs. men
- Occ. voice disorders in Poland account for 25 % of all occupational diseases
- Noise levels prominent. Suitable level for learning >15 dB, measured noise up to 110 dB. during recess, teachers intensity varied from 79.5-90.5 dB.(A)



Decision Outcome

- Reconsideration at operational level
- The WSIB medical consultant reviews the medical (OHCOW) and confirms a direct relationship between the amount of teaching, her gender, and the heavy use of speaking excessively at high volume
- The claim was then allowed at operational level



Exposures Linked to Vocal Issues

- Noise- echo, acoustic conditions, noise within school and outside of school
- Workload, size of class, work pressure
- Using load voice, voice use (shouting)
- Temperature, humidity, lighting
- Irritants, black board chalk dust
- Chemicals



Program Development

Workload and opportunities for vocal rest

Formal voice training

Awareness training with early referral to occ. health, voice therapist or ENT

Voice disorder screening

Health and safety guidelines addressing the demands put on teacher's voices

Noise and voice conservation programs

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Munier, C. et al. (2007), Sliwinska-Kowalska, M. et al. (2006)



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