

JOB STRESS FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF UPPER EXTREMITY  
MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS AMONG NEWSPAPER EMPLOYEES

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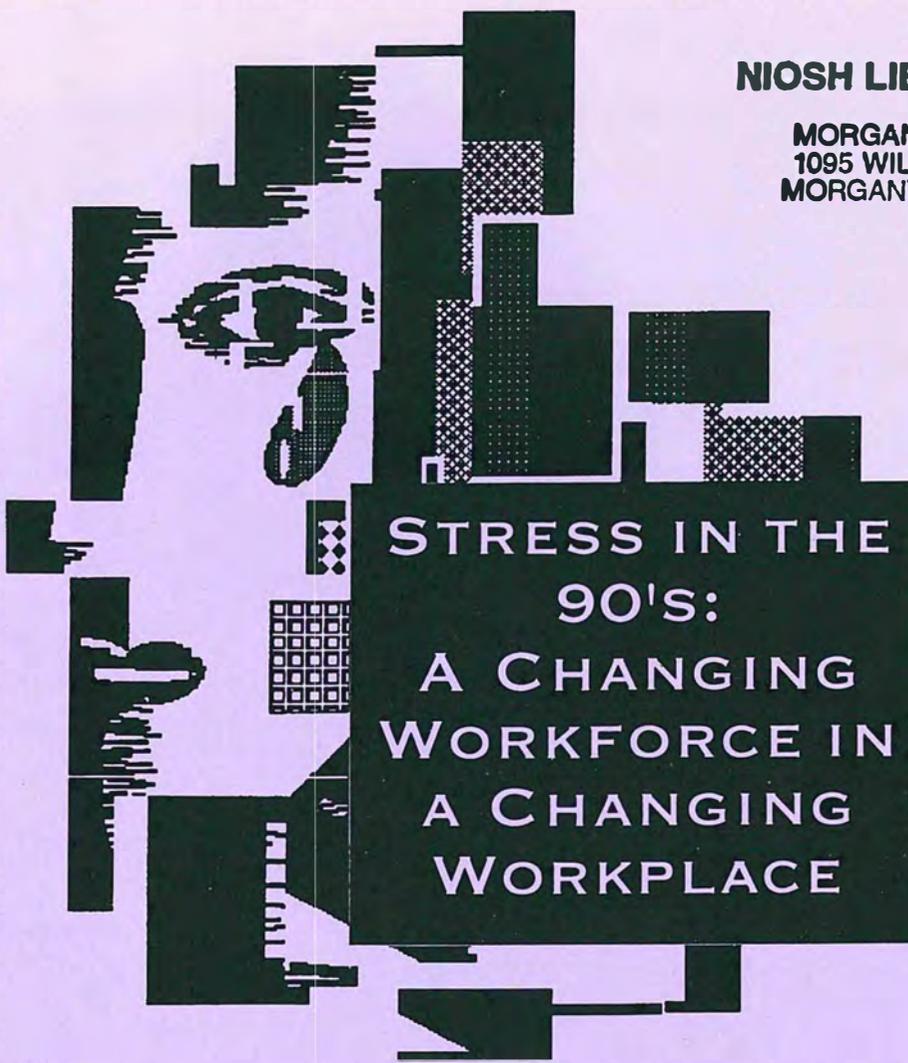
The video display terminal (VDT) has had great impact on all aspects of work for newspaper employee staff. New dimensions of work stress have surfaced, and concurrently, a striking increase in reports of upper extremity musculoskeletal disorders (UEMD) from news personnel. This paper reports on the findings from a cross-sectional study of work-related UEMD among VDT users at a large metropolitan newspaper. It addresses risk factors of UEMD, focusing on psychosocial job stressors, and their relationship to more established risk factors, such as biomechanical stressors, physical factors, and specific job tasks.

The study was conducted in response to a health hazard evaluation request received from four departments were randomly selected for study. Two of the departments consisted of mainly clerical and data-entry VDT operators (Circulation and Classified Advertising Departments), and two departments consisted of newspaper professionals using VDTs, (Editorial and Finance Department). 971 study participants (a 92% participation rate) completed a self-administered questionnaire which elicited information on: demographics, work history, job tasks, work station design and equipment used, work practices, work organization, and the psychosocial environment at work; and musculoskeletal discomfort.

The NIOSH general job stress instrument was used to obtain information on the psychosocial aspects of work. These scales have

been used in prior occupational health research, were selected for validity and reliability, and are considered to have an absence of stressor-strain confounding. The scales include those addressing workload demands, job control, worker isolation, job security, hostility from clients, and social support.

Multivariate logistic regression was used to examine the effects of these variables in predicting UEMD. With analyses performed within departments, results showed that the psychosocial variables were better predictors of neck disorders than hand/wrist UEMDs. The clerical VDT departments consistently reported higher levels of psychological stress in most of the variable scales tested compared to the professional staff using VDTs. However, the importance of these variables was diminished somewhat in the final logistic regression models where several job task and demographic variables emerged as stronger predictors of UEMDs.



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