**PAPER NUMBER #117**

**The COMPARE project: Evaluating the impact of workers’ compensation policy in Australia using quasi-experimental methods**

**Presenting Authors**

Prof A Collie, Dr Tyler Lane, and Dr Shannon Gray

**Affiliation**

Insurance Work and Health Group, Faculty of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University

**Country of residence**

Australia

**Objectives/aims**

The COMpensation Policy And Return to work Effectiveness (COMPARE) study is a national comparative effectiveness study of the impact of workers’ compensation policy on return to work (RTW) following work-related injury. The study aims to (1) identify policy settings that contribute to reductions in time lost from work in the more than 240,000 Australians who make workers’ compensation claims annually; and (2) develop a government/research collaboration that enables transfer of knowledge between the research team, national and state/territory level government policy agencies, employers and workers.

**Methods**

Now in its fourth year, the study uses a comparative effectiveness methodology, applying epidemiological and quasi-experimental analysis methods to the National Database of Compensation Statistics and the National Return to Work Survey. Using these two unique national data sources, the study compares RTW outcomes (1) before and after changes in policy; and (2) between cohorts of injured and ill workers. The study maintains an ongoing forum for dialogue with the nine major Australian workers’ compensation regulators, employer and worker representative bodies. This forum assists in identifying relevant policy and cohorts for evaluation, and in the communication and translation of study findings.

**Main findings**

Major findings include (1) legislative amendments in Tasmania designed to improve RTW outcomes failed; (2) legislative amendments in South Australia to encourage employers to submit claims faster were partly effective; (3) legislative amendments in New South Wales to ensure the financial viability of the workers’ compensation scheme reduced access to compensation and differentially affected some workers; (4) the prevalence of employer practices associated with positive RTW outcomes varies between states; and (5) some groups of workers are at high risk of specific injury and/or poor RTW outcomes. Findings are beginning to be cited as evidence in recent efforts to reform Australian compensation systems.