

Ngabirano L, Fadel M, Leclerc A, Evanoff BA, Dale AM, d'Errico A, Roquelaure Y, Descatha A

Association between physical limitations and working life exposure to carrying heavy loads assessed using a job-exposure matrix: CONSTANCES cohort

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION - Decline in physical performance with age varies among workers. We studied the association between lifetime exposure to carrying heavy loads and limitations in climbing stairs. **METHODS** - We used data from the French CONSTANCES study. A biomechanical Job-Exposure Matrix (JEM) was combined with lifetime job histories to build a cumulative exposure score, and compared with reported limitations in climbing stairs using robust Poisson models, stratified by sex and educational level. **RESULTS** - Of the 26,255 subjects, 618 men and 1,080 women reported difficulties in climbing stairs; this outcome was associated with cumulative exposure to carrying heavy loads: adjusted PR= 2.17 (1.75-2.73) for men, 1.50 (1.30-1.74) for women. The association was primarily seen among less educated subjects. **CONCLUSION** - Cumulative work exposure to carrying heavy loads across the working life was associated with physical limitations in climbing stairs among the less educated in both genders.

KEYWORDS: Epidemiology; Job-exposure matrix; Physical exposure; Physical limitation; Work disability

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