

# Cervical Neck Injury Among Plastic Surgeons

*Chad Teven, MD; Patrick Reavey, MD, MS; David H. Song, MD, MBA, FACS*

**Disclosure/Financial Support:** The authors have no commercial associations or financial disclosures that might pose or create a conflict of interest with information presented in this synopsis.

**INTRODUCTION:** Physician health can impact both patient safety and physician quality of life. Many surgeons complain of neck pain and injury; however, there is little research formally addressing this topic.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this study is to estimate the prevalence of cervical neck injuries among plastic surgeons and to determine their functional impact.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** A 25-question self-assessment tool was administered to plastic surgeons at our institution via email in the pilot phase of the study. Questionnaires were developed using SurveyMonkey (surveymonkey.com). Data were analyzed to quantify injuries and identify associated factors.

**RESULTS:** Eleven of thirteen (85%) plastic surgeons responded to the survey. Nine (82%) respondents were male. 45% were between the ages of 35-44, 27% between 45-54, 18% between 55-64, and 9% between 65-74. Ten (91%) of eleven respondents reported significant neck pain or injury as a result of their occupation. Specific injuries included strain of neck musculature (n=7), cervical root or disc pain (n=3), disc herniation (n=2), radiculopathy (n=2), and neck spasm (n=1). Cervical neck injury was commonplace despite variation in workplace factors in the pilot phase of the study (e.g., years in practice, time spent in the operating room, time spent using surgical loupes, operating posture). A significant number of respondents reported that injuries had a moderate to severe impact on performance in the operating room (37.5%), overall job satisfaction (50%), and home life satisfaction (37.5%). Of note, greater than 60% of respondents reported at least daily pain related to their neck injury. The majority of injured surgeons (62.5%) were unaware of institutional resources to support their recovery.

**CONCLUSION:** This pilot survey clearly demonstrates a significant problem with occupational neck injuries among plastic surgeons and that these injuries significantly impact performance in the operating room as well as home and work life. The next phase of this study, currently in progress, is to survey members of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons to better understand the impact of neck injuries in our field and to identify prevention strategies. We believe that with a larger number of respondents, specific workplace factors (e.g., loupe usage, cervical neck exercise/stretching) will prove harmful or protective with respect to cervical neck injury within our specialty.

## REFERENCES:

1. Rohrich RJ. Why I hate the headlight...and other ways to protect your cervical spine. *Plast Reconstr Surg.* 2001;107:1037-8.