No significant differences in tremor measures were found when all welders were compared with all referents. Altogether twenty-five subjects had sCDT above the pathological level (1.7%). The subjects with high sCDT had increased tremor. Dominant hand: Tremor Intensity 0.21 m/s², compared to 0.15 m/s² (p < 0.001) for subjects with sCDT < 1.7%. Non-dominant hand: Tremor Intensity 0.22 m/s² vs 0.15 m/s² (p < 0.001).

The same pattern was found when the 16 welders with sCDT ≥ 1.7% were compared with welders with sCDT values < 1.7%. The concentrations of the biological exposure indicators were similar in the welders with sCDT ≥ 1.7% compared to the other welders (B-Mn 12.8 vs 12.7 µg/L; U-Mn 0.34 vs 0.36 µg/g cr.; S-Mn 1.3 vs 1.0 µg/L).

Conclusions No effect of manganese exposure on tremor was observed, in contrast to a large effect from alcohol consumption. The results suggest that alcohol consumption can operate as a serious confounder in epidemiological studies of neurotoxicants.

Objectives Prevalence studies of thoracic spinal pain (TSP) in the working population are scarce. The epidemiological surveillance of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), implemented in 2002 by the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance, allows the study of the prevalence of TSP in a large sample of workers. The aim of this study is to present the prevalence of TSP during the preceding 7 days in the Pays de la Loire region’s workforce according to age, combination with low back pain and neck pain, occupational category and industry sector, separately in men and women.

Method A random sample of 3710 workers (58% of men) aged 20–59 years, representative of the regional workforce, was constituted between 2002 and 2005. Medical and occupational data were gathered by questionnaire.

Results The prevalence of TSP was higher among women (17.4%) than men (9.2%), without age difference. Only 15.2% of TSP in men and 15.7% in women was declared without low back pain or/and neck pain. Among men, lower-grade white-collar workers were more likely to report TSP (16.6%) than other occupational categories workers (upper white-collar and professionals: 7.2%, technicians/associate professionals: 6.5%, blue-collar workers: 9.7%). Among women, upper-white collar and professionals were more likely to report TSP (25.6%) than the others (technicians/associate professionals: 17.0%, lower-grade white-collar workers: 17.1%, blue-collar workers: 16.7%). The study did not suggest a significant difference in the prevalence of TSP according to sectors in either men or women.

Conclusions This study shows that, among workers, TSP is frequent and often combined with low back pain or neck pain.
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