

Public release date: 7-Jul-2006

Contact: Bev Betkowski

beverly.betkowski@ualberta.ca

780-492-3808

[University of Alberta](#)

Medication use linked to farmers' injuries

Older farmers are at high risk for injury when they stop taking prescribed pain medications, shows a study done in part by the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada.

A case review of farmers aged 66 and older in Alberta, Canada, revealed some previously unknown relationships may exist between the use of pain medications and subsequent injury. For instance, when farmers stopped taking prescribed pain or anti-inflammatory medications within the 30 days prior to the date of injury, there was a higher risk of getting hurt while working on the farm. The injuries included falls, being struck by an object, or wounds inflicted while working with farm machinery or livestock

By linking data from various health and agricultural registries, the researchers identified 8,129 male farmers aged 66 or older. In that group, 282 suffered farm-related injuries related to how they used their pain medication.

Researchers were able to identify several possible reasons for this, said Dr. Don Voaklander, one of the study's authors and a professor of Public Health Sciences at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. Queens University also worked on the study.

"The first is that pain, unmasked when they stop using medication, distracts the farmer when he's doing his work. This means less attention to the task at hand. A second possibility involves limitations on mobility for farmers who are in pain or who are guarding their movements as a result of pain." Third, those who use pain medication may be experiencing withdrawal symptoms that again may be distracting in a dynamic work environment.

Researchers also discovered that incontinence and urinary tract disorders were linked to injury, as farmers were likely distracted by the discomfort.

Physicians and urologists treating dynamic older working people such as farmers may want to reinforce with their patients, the importance of recovering from injury before taking on strenuous work, using their medications as prescribed to recover properly from injury, and the importance of understanding how their health limitations may affect their management and interaction with the working environment, Dr. Voaklander said.

###

The study was published recently in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine and was funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

For more information contact:

Bev Betkowski

Media Relations Officer

University of Alberta

780-492-3808

beverly.betskowski@ualberta.ca
