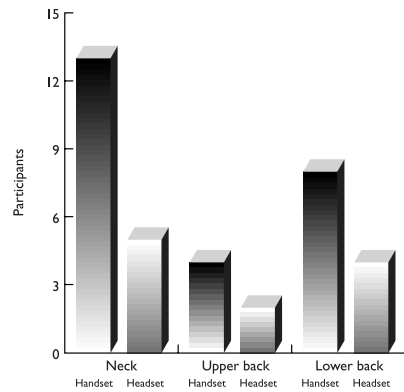
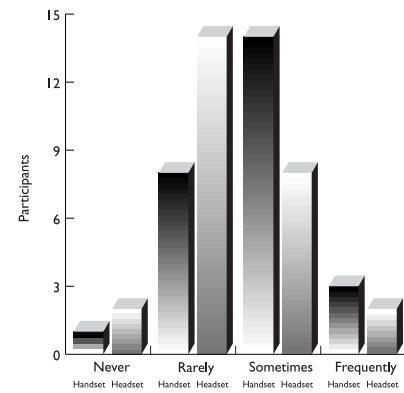


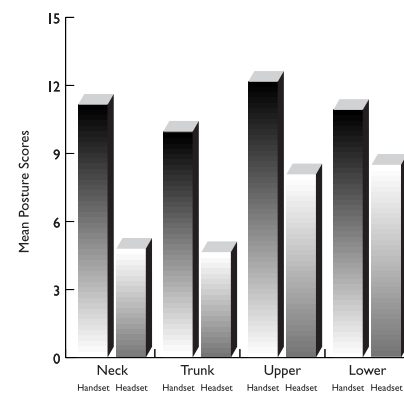
Summary of the results of the research



The number of participants reporting musculoskeletal symptoms



The number of participants reporting headaches



The difference between handset and headset mean posture scores for neck, trunk, lower and upper arm

Neck and back pain

The research found that 50% of office workers suffered from neck pain and 31% suffered from lower back pain.

Headaches were more frequent when using a handset rather than a headset

The research found that 65% of participants suffered from headaches either sometimes or frequently when using a telephone handset for more than two hours a day. By comparison to 38% of respondents who sometimes or frequently suffered from headaches when using a headset. Therefore, using a telephone headset reduced headaches by 27%. In addition, 35% of handset users said they rarely or never had headaches by comparison to 62% of headset users.

A greater the risk of aches and pains to muscles, joints, tendons and other soft tissues

Researchers from the health sciences department at Surrey University observed the postures adopted by individuals involved in telephone work at computer workstations. The mean posture scores were calculated for handset and headset users as illustrated below. The higher the mean score the greater the risk of degeneration of joints, inflammation to tendons, painful muscle stiffening and disc troubles.

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Phone use: A cause of neck complaints

The Effect of Telephone Headset Use on Working Posture and Self Reported Musculoskeletal Symptoms: An Intervention Study

Summary Document



50% of office workers find their phones a pain in the neck!



Hundreds of thousands of people who regularly use a phone are likely to suffer from neck and back pain as well as headaches. According to the first detailed study of telephone users in the office environment there is a measurable health risk for anyone using the phone for as little as two hours a day.

The research commissioned by Plantronics, the world's leading communication headset manufacturer, and conducted by the health sciences department at Surrey University found that 50% of office workers suffered from neck pain and 31% suffered from lower back pain. Surprisingly, 65% of participants also said they suffered from headaches sometimes or frequently.

"The real value of this study is that it provides a comprehensive real-life picture of the postures associated by telephone use in the daily office environment", said Paul Clark, International Marketing Director of Plantronics. "Although legislation requires that risk assessments of computer workstations should be conducted regularly, in compliance with the 1992 DSE regulations, telephone use has been overlooked."

This detailed two month study analysed the postures adopted to use the telephone. All participants used the phone and computer simultaneously during their work and spent a minimum of two hours on the phone each day. In a cross-over study, each participant was monitored during a four-week period using the traditional telephone handset (control condition) and four weeks with a Plantronics headset (intervention condition).

Nearly two thirds of respondents said they rarely or never had a headache when using the Plantronics headset. In addition, the research found that using a Plantronics headset reduced neck pains by 31%, lower back pain by 16% and upper back pain by 9%. Headaches were reduced by 27% when a headset was used.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in health complaints in the lower arm, shoulder and neck, which is now as common as back pain. While 'Phone Neck' – caused by the phone being gripped between the head and shoulders leaving both hands free to use the computer or take notes – is a common complaint amongst telephone and mobile phone users, until now there has been little scientific research into this condition.

"Unlike manual worker safety, the issue of occupational injury among office staff is still not taken seriously enough by employers", said Elizabeth Simpson MCSP, SRP, author of the study and a practising physiotherapist. "This is partly because the injuries caused by bad telephone habits cannot be seen and take time to manifest. This study has shown that the use of telephone headsets can reduce neck pain, back pain and headaches in subjects who use the phone and computer simultaneously for a minimum of two hours a day."

Commentary by Elizabeth Simpson, Author of the Study

"Since awkward or constrained postures are associated with increased risk of musculoskeletal disorders and reduced work performance, the focus of our study was the effect of telephone use upon working postures. We observed measurable differences between the postures adopted while using a telephone receiver, compared to a telephone headset.

"Any posture which constrains the body in an awkward position puts greater pressure on the joints and muscles, as well as increasing the risk of nerve compression. Many of the postures adopted to use a telephone receiver could increase the risk of work-related musculoskeletal disorders. Perhaps the most commonly observed posture is to grip the telephone between shoulder and head, leaving both hands free to use a computer, or take notes during the call. This posture increases the risk of nerve compression in the neck and shoulder area, which could lead to a range of problems in the spine, arm and hands.

"Another potentially dangerous telephone posture involves leaning forward away from the back of the chair while taking a call. This puts greater pressure on the spine, which can cause discomfort; at worst it could lead to a cumulative disorder.

"Our participants reacted very positively to headsets, which not only provided greater comfort at work, but also led to a significant reduction in neck pain and headaches. The message for employers is that anyone who uses the telephone for a minimum of two hours a day in conjunction with a computer could benefit from a headset, which significantly improves working posture and consequently reduces risk of injury."

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