



PSI Evidence-Based Newsletter

The **only** physiotherapy clinics in Ottawa **accredited** by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association for excellence in service

Motor Vehicle Accidents (MVA's) - The Facts

- About 10% of all whiplash injuries become long-term in rear-end crashes, and 5% in frontal crashes.
- 1 person in 300 who has an MVA will develop chronic neck pain and symptoms.
- Patients with the lowest expectations of recovery after an MVA have a poorer recovery than those who have higher expectations.
- 15% of people still report neck and other symptoms three years after their MVA.
- Some of the strongest prognostic indicators are factors present before impact: pre-injury back pain, pre-injury depression/anxiety, high frequency of GP visits and a front position in the vehicle.

More!

- Typical clinical findings include: neck or jaw pain, paraspinal muscle tightness and spasm. There may be interscapular and/or low back pain.
- Headaches, dizziness, vertigo and blurred vision may occur.
- Some patients have insomnia, anxiety and/or depression.
- Arm weakness or numbness may indicate injury to the cervical nerve roots.
- Rates of Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are high in patients after serious MVA's.
- Soft tissue injury can occur at speeds of less than 20Km/hr.
- Most MVAs affect soft tissues, muscles, tendons or ligaments, which don't show up on X-Ray.
- Pain often doesn't appear until the day after the MVA. It usually peaks 1-2 days after the accident.

Physiotherapy helps!

- Research has shown that early mobilization using physiotherapy instead of a soft collar is superior in terms of pain intensity and disability.
- Further research has shown that active treatment reduced pain more than standard treatment (rest/collar).
- Early physiotherapy treatment (within 96 hours) has been shown to be more effective in reducing pain than delayed active treatment.
- During the acute stage Physiotherapists help the patients manage their pain through postural correction, exercise and if needed, modalities. They also offer re-assurance and education about the condition and prognosis.
- **Bottom line.** Re-assure your patients that they will get better, refer to physiotherapy straight away to get them moving and back to normal as quickly as possible.

Why use PSI Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Centres?

- ✓ We improve level of function, ability to work, and quality of life.
- ✓ We aim for long-term results not just short-term pain relief.
- ✓ We use outcome measures such as the neck disability index (NDI) to monitor progress.