**Sickness absence after carpal tunnel release: a systematic review of the literature**

**Authors**

Lisa Newington, MSc 1, 2

Martin Stevens, LLB 1

David Warwick, MD 3

Jo Adams, PhD 4

Karen Walker-Bone, PhD 1

**Affiliations**

1. Arthritis Research UK – MRC Centre for Musculoskeletal Health and Work, MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK
2. Hand Therapy, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
3. Faculty of Medicine, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Southampton, UK
4. Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK; Arthritis Research UK Centre of Excellence for Sport, Exercise and Osteoarthritis

**Address for correspondence**

Lisa Newington, MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit (University of Southampton), Southampton General Hospital (MP 95), Tremona Road, Southampton, SO16 6YD, UK

[ln@mrc.soton.ac.uk](mailto:ln@mrc.soton.ac.uk)

+44 (0)23 8077 7624

**Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank: Paula Sands and Tom Wake of the University of Southampton Health Sciences Library for their assistance in obtaining full text articles for this review; Professor Keith Palmer and Dr Georgia Ntani for their assistance with the data syntheses; and Rob Wilson for his assistance with data visualisation.

**Authors’ contributions**

LN, KWB, JA and DW conceived the study and prepared the draft manuscript. LN and MS performed the literature screening and data extraction. LN and KWB performed the risk of bias assessments and data syntheses. All authors reviewed and contributed to the final manuscript.

**Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Funding**

LN was funded by an NIHR Doctoral Research Fellowship (Ref: DRF-2015-08-056). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health.

**SUMMARY**

Time to return to work after carpal tunnel release varied widely in the literature and was inconsistently measured. Few studies reported specific occupational information, such as return to work times for different duties or work schedules. It is currently not possible to provide evidence-based guidance for patients about when they might expect to return safely to their work.

**Running head**: Return to work after carpal tunnel release

**Number of characters:** 22,768 (26,979 including spaces)

**Number of words:** 4,242

**Number of tables:** 3

**Number of figures:** 3