



# ARCTIC HEALTH

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## An examination of coping styles and expectations for whiplash injury in Germany: comparison with Canadian data.

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Author: Robert Ferrari

Stephanie Pieschl

Author Affiliation: Department of Medicine, University of Alberta, 11350-83 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, Canada. rferrari@shaw.ca

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Abstract:

Cross-sectional cohort study: to examine concurrent expectations and coping style for whiplash injury in injury-naive subjects in Germany. Studies suggest the recovery rate from whiplash injury may be faster in Germany than in Canada. Canadians have a high expectation for chronic pain following whiplash injury and Germans do not. Expectation of recovery not only predicts recovery in whiplash victims but is also known to correlate with coping style. The Vanderbilt Pain Management Inventory was administered to university students and staff in Germany. Subjects who had not yet experienced whiplash injury were given a vignette concerning a neck sprain (whiplash injury) in a motor vehicle collision and were asked to indicate how likely they were to have thoughts or behaviours indicated in the coping style questionnaire. Subjects also completed expectation questionnaires regarding whiplash injury. Sixteen percent of subjects held an expectation of chronic neck or back pain after whiplash injury. The mean active coping style score was  $27.4 \pm 3.6$  (40 is the maximum score for active coping). The mean passive coping style score was  $27.0 \pm 6.3$  (50 is the maximum score for passive coping). Coping style scores and patterns were not different from those previously observed in Canadian studies, but there was no correlation between expectations and coping style among German subjects, a finding that differs from Canadian studies. Although expectations and coping styles may interact or be co-modifiers in the outcomes of whiplash injury in Canadian whiplash victims, in Germany, despite having similar coping styles to Canadians, the lack of expectation for chronic pain may be protective from the effect of passive coping styles. Further studies of coping style as an aetiologic factor in the chronic whiplash syndrome are needed.

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