

Evidence for Functional Capacity Evaluations - the test-retest reliability of the WorkHab FCE.

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Introduction: Functional capacity evaluations (FCE's) are an integral part of work injury prevention and occupational rehabilitation. FCE's are designed to provide a comprehensive, performance based assessment, and to define the functional abilities and limitations of an individual. The WorkHab Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) is one of many FCE's currently available, however there is a lack of published literature regarding it's reliability and validity. Reliability of an assessment is the extent to which the measure is consistent and free from error, and demonstrates the reproducibility of the assessment over time. Test retest reliability indicates stability of the assessment results.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to investigate the test-retest reliability of three of the manual handling components of the WorkHab FCE - the floor to bench, bench to shoulder and bench to bench lifts.

Methods: A convenience sample of 25 healthy subjects, consisting of 19 women and 6 men with a mean age of 29 years (SD :12.0) participated in this study. Two FCE sessions were held a week apart and participants completed the manual handling component of the FCE. Descriptive analysis, Intra Class Correlations (ICC), Kappa, and percentage agreement were calculated where appropriate.

Results: The ICC's for the three lifts show an excellent reliability (0.90 - 0.92). However, a moderate reliability for the manual handling score (0.74) was identified. The percentage agreement was high for all components ranging from 72-92%.

Conclusions: The results of the lifting items identified substantial levels of test retest reliability. Clinicians can therefore have increased confidence in the test retest reliability of these lifting components within the WorkHab FCE.

Contribution to the practice/ evidence base of OT: This research is an important contribution to evidence based practice. In previous research it has been suggested that therapists are basing decisions on historical information and practices rather than evidence based practice and current research. In relation to the use of FCE's this research will enable therapists to utilise both evidence and current research to guide practice.