SHARING BACK FINDINGS: THE PULSE POULTRY STUDY

ABOUT THE STUDY

In November 2022, a team of researchers from the **University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)**, started a study to understand how the speed of poultry processing lines affects workers' health and safety. This work was supported by the **USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)**. Between November 2023 and April 2024, they **visited 11 poultry processing plants and worked with over 1,000 workers to gather information.**

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STUDY QUESTIONS

- **How does the speed of chicken processing affect workers' risk of muscle and joint problems**, called musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)?
- **Are workers exposed to harmful chemicals**, like peracetic acid (PAA), a food processing disinfectant that is corrosive and irritating to humans?

WHAT WE FOUND

- **4 in 5 evaluated workers** were found to be at high risk of developing **musculoskeletal disorders**.
- Workers who handled more chicken parts per minute faced a **higher risk of injuries**, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.
- **2 in 5 evaluated workers reported moderate to severe work-related pain** in the past year, yet many did not inform their supervisors due to fears of job loss.
- **1 in 5** jobs tested showed **peracetic acid levels exceeding safety** recommendations, potentially causing **breathing issues and irritation**.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

The study suggests these ways to help improve safety:

- Lower the worker speed by **decreasing the number of chicken parts each worker handles per minute**
- **Add more staff** to share the workload and reduce ergonomic hazard
- **Reduce the speed of the chicken parts being handled** in front of each worker
- Provide **better medical support** and encourage workers to **report pain early**, so injuries don't get worse.
- Reduce peracetic acid exposure by **improving ventilation** and using less of the chemical where possible

This study would not have been possible without the workers who participated. We sincerely appreciate your time and effort in helping researchers better understand these important issues. **Our goal is to make poultry processing jobs safer and healthier for everyone.**