Western Kentucky University

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2016

Truck Drivers: The Challenge with Healthy Living

Kim Bourne, Western Kentucky University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/kim-bourne/5/
Truck Drivers: The Challenge with Healthy Living

Kim Bourne, MSN, RN, SANE, CEN
Disclosures, Funding, Acknowledgements

• No disclosures
• No funding
  – Existing literature and experiences
• Thank you
  – Husband, friends, and family
Objectives

• Describe the demographics and current health indicators of truck drivers in US.

• Identify the activities/resources available to over the road truck drivers.

• Discuss strategies to improve the health of truck drivers
Who I am

• Wife, mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law

• Nurse
  – 20 years
  – Many areas
  – Teach
    • RN to BSN
  – PhD Student
    • Female truck drivers
I am also a Female Truck Driver
A Female Truck Driver
3.5 million drivers
- 5.8-6% female

Demographics (male and female)
- Median age 30-50 years old
- 65-95% Caucasian
- 50-75% married
- 60-90% at least a high school education

Company drivers or owner operators
Solo or team drivers
Long-haul or short-haul (local and regional)
What being a Long-Haul Driver is Like

• Gone at least 21 days/month
• Irregular schedules
• Drive an average of 600 miles/day
  – 14 hour work days
    • 11 driving
    • 3 extra hours
    • Mandatory 10 hour breaks
• Climbing up and down
• Loading, unloading cargo
• Small cabs
  – Eat, sleep, and relax
• Eat out a lot
What I learned on the road

• Nice people and not so nice people
• Not easy
• People drive stupid
• The snow is worse in Wyoming in April
• Texas really is flat and long and wide and boring
• Healthy living is hard, especially for long-haul drivers
Food at Truck Stops

• Major truck stops
  – Usually found off major highways
  – Love’s, Pilot, TA, Flying J
    • McDonald's, Subway, Chester’s Chicken, Taco Bell, Hardee’s, Wendy’s, Popeye’s, Pizza Hut, Denny’s, hot and cold food
    • Sit down restaurants at Flying J and TA

• Mom and Pop truck stops
  – Usually found in rural areas
    • May or may not have restaurant, may or may not have hot or cold food
Problems Truck Drivers Face

- Physical
  - Obesity
    - Little activity, eating out
  - Pain
    - Hip, back, arms
  - Injuries
    - Slips, trips, and falls
  - Heart disease
    - HTN
    - High cholesterol
    - Smoking
  - DVT’s and peripheral edema
  - Diabetes

- Digestion problems
- Sleep apnea
- Body fatigue
  - Irregular schedules
  - Takes a toll
- Headaches
  - Vibrations
  - Stress
  - Fumes and chemicals
- Hearing loss
- Bladder problems
- Drug and alcohol abuse
• Psychological
  – Stress and anxiety
    • Job itself (dispatchers, break-downs)
    • Meeting time deadlines
    • Traffic (heavy traffic, aggressive drivers)
    • Weather
    • No or little social support systems
  – Mental fatigue
    • Sleep disturbances
    • Inactivity (monotonous)
  – PTSD
    • Violence
• Personal safety
  – Few parking spaces
    • Truck stops, rest areas, exit/enter ramps, empty parking lots, customer lots (infrequently), store lots (infrequently)
  – Dangerous areas
  – Cost of cargo
  – Sexual violence, especially for females
    • Harassment, sexual assault, IPV
Problems with Healthcare

• Limited access
  – No routine exams
  – Self-treat illnesses
  – Delay care
• Insurance
  – Expensive and often not affordable (especially for owner operators)
• DOT physicals every 2 years
  – Many be done by different providers
    • Rely on driver for past medical history and medication history
Activities/Resources Available to Truck Drivers

• Improved health
  – Able to have small appliances
    • Inverters for 110 plugs or cigarette lighter plugs
  – Healthier options available at restaurants
  – Animals on trucks
  – Technology for communication

• Healthcare
  – Weekend hours
  – Truck stop clinics (approximately 80 in US)

• Safety
  – More parking
Improving the Health of Truck Drivers

• Teach
  – Stress reduction techniques
  – Healthier eating
  – Physical exercises
  – Fatigue prevention
  – Self-defense techniques

• More gyms or facilities available

• Break rooms

• Improve truck stops and provide down-time areas dedicated to drivers

• Make access to healthcare easier
References


 References


References

• Lively, C. (2010). In the Driver's Seat: Living and Working as a Trucker.


Questions
Thank You