

Shoulder to Shoulder: North American Firefighters' Perspectives Navigating Interventions and Healthcare Choices for Work-Related Shoulder Disorders

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Introduction

**Shoulder disorders** are the **third most common** musculoskeletal injuries among firefighters (Tahernejad et al., 2023). Strenuous activities, influenced by the heavy protective gear and tools used to carry out firefighting tasks, inherently increase their risk of developing work-related shoulder disorders (WSDs) (Osifeso et al., 2025). The unique occupational demand of firefighting underscores the need for targeted intervention and occupational health programs tailored to the demands of firefighting.

Purpose

- To explore the management strategies that firefighters employ following work-related shoulder disorders
- To understand the needs and preferences of firefighters with work-related shoulder disorders in relation to their occupational health and recovery

Methodology

**Interpretive description** answers questions about a clinical experience in which understanding the phenomenon is co-constructed and considered necessary (Thorne et al., 2016).

Demographics

Figure 1: Country

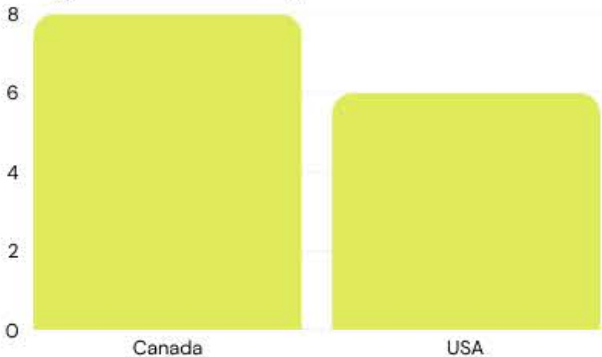


Figure 2: Type of Shoulder Disorder

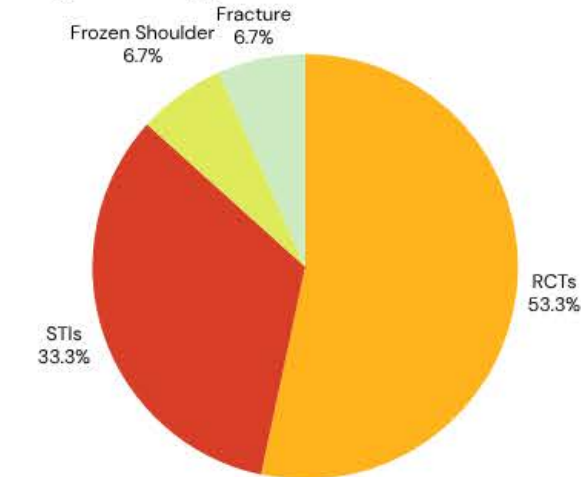
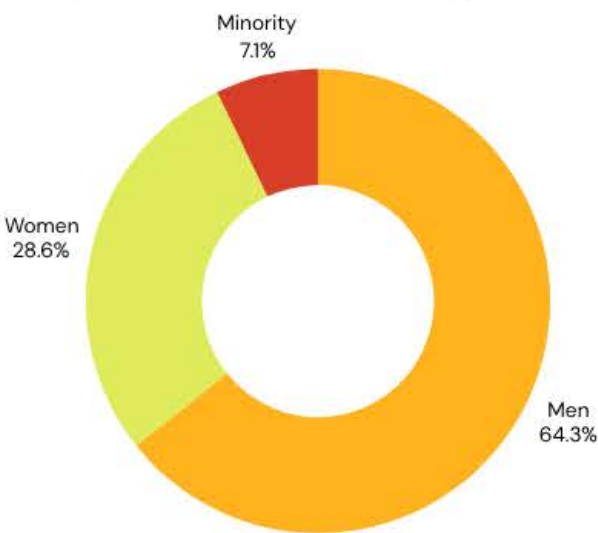
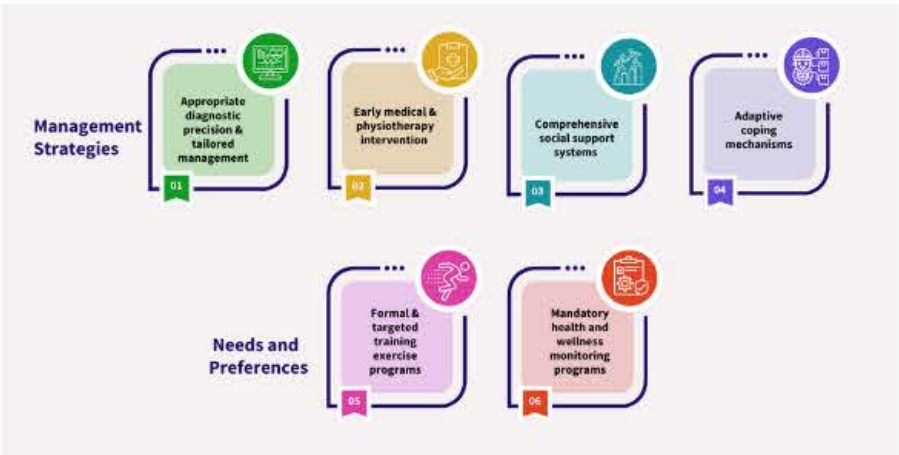


Figure 3: Gender of Participants



Findings – Major Themes

Figure 4: Conceptual Model



Findings – Quotes

Sub-Themes	Quotes
Diagnostic insights on treatment planning	"...We had the MRI, and they saw exactly what was happening, that my courses of action were to be very disciplined with physical therapy both prior to and post-surgery..." FF03, Male, RCT
Organizational Support and Workplace Modifications	"...In terms of my actual workplace, I mean they're very accommodating in terms of modified duties and making sure when I come back to work, I can do the proper exercises ...take breaks and ice my shoulder if I need to..." FF11, Male, Subscapularis Tear
Need for functional and diverse training programs	"...creating training regimes that are balanced and diverse so that you can recreate diversity of movement rather than sort of like constantly arm curls or, you know, bench presses, right?" FF13, Female, Frozen Shoulder
Legislative Support for Health Monitoring	"...Well, I know the legislation is coming down the pipe for more medical monitoring, and in my opinion, it's a long time...it's going to become mandatory that we have medical monitoring ...I think it'll be a step in the right direction..." FF12, Male, Bicep Tendinopathy

Conclusion/Implications

- Firefighters' management strategies for WSDs involve a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the physical and psychosocial aspects of recovery.
- Our findings advocate for more formal, targeted training exercise programs and mandatory health monitoring, both of which are crucial in minimizing WSDs and preventing re-injury.

Clinicians Recruitment Ongoing



Acknowledgements



Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders

