



PERSONAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SEEKING HEALTH CARE FOR LOW BACK PAIN

Kanyana Juliet, Ulrike Ott, Kurt T. Hegmann (Matthew S. Thiese)
Department of Family & Preventive Medicine

Background

Low back pain (LBP) is the top reason patients seek medical care. The cost of treatment for low back pain has a major economic impact with total costs exceeding \$100 billion per year in the US. LBP is the most common cause of job-related disability, missed work and workers compensation claims. This study's objective is to analyze the association between personal factors and seeing a health care provider for LBP (HCP for LBP).

Methods

In this cross-sectional report from a prospective cohort study, 827 participants were workers enrolled from 30 facilities performing a variety of manual material handling tasks. Participants answered a computerized questionnaire that included medical health items and psychosocial factors including: (a) demographics, (b) past medical history, (c) psychosocial questions, and (d) other questions (e.g., sleeping patterns and smoking). Participants also underwent a structured interview detailing pain ratings and location. Body Mass indices were calculated. Outcomes are self-reported seeing a physician, physical therapist, nurse, massage therapist or chiropractor for LBP.

Results

Women were statistically significantly less likely than men to have HCP for LBP with Odds Ratio (ORs) of 0.71 [95% Confidence Interval (95% CI) 0.52-0.96]. Participants with high cholesterol had ORs=2.44 (95% CI 1.71-3.49) for HCP for LBP as compared to participants without high cholesterol. As compared to never smokers, current smokers had ORs=1.73 (95% CI 1.21-2.48), and past smokers had ORs=1.19 (95% 0.83- 1.71). Participants who seldom, often or always had family problems had statistically significantly higher odds ratio for seeking health care for LBP, ORs=1.88 to 2.23, than participants who never had family problems. Multivariate modeling to adjust for confounding resulted in a final main effects model that had age, gender, BMI, high cholesterol, family problems and tobacco.

Conclusion

The study concludes that age ($p < 0.0001$), gender ($p < 0.0001$), high cholesterol ($p = 0.003$), family problems ($p = 0.0004$), and current tobacco users ($p = 0.0161$) are significantly related HCP for LBP.

