Commentary

PREVALENCE OF LOW BACK PAIN AMONG JEEPNEY DRIVERS IN METRO MANILA: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Jeepney drivers assume the sitting position for prolonged periods of time because of the requirements of their occupation, which could lead to musculoskeletal impairments specifically low back pain (LBP). The objectives of this study are to gather sufficient data regarding the prevalence of low back pain (LBP) in jeepney drivers taking different routes in Metro Manila and to determine the occupational related factors that may cause LBP. ***Methodology:*** All 420 randomized participants were given two questionnaires: the Nordic Low Back Pain Questionnaire and the questionnaire on occupational-working patterns. Survey analysis was used to interpret the data collected. ***Results:*** The results have shown that 87.90% of the subjects have LBP which are related to factors such as incorporation of rest periods, length of time driving and use of back support. Most of the subjects (55.06%) have claimed working for 11 to 15 hours. Around 59.83% subjects incorporated less than 6 rest periods within the day and 60.11% subjects claimed that they use back support. ***Conclusions:*** There is a high prevalence of low back pain among jeepney drivers in Metro Manila and this may affect work productivity due to taking time off work and time taken to seek medical attention. Jeepney drivers with pain commonly experience it from 1-7 days during the last 12 months. Majority of drivers do not seek medical advice. This has significant impact on the financial capabilities, both of the driver and the company as it requires additional cost for medications and consultation. The use of back support during driving seems to decrease the occurrence of low back pain.

Keywords*: low back pain, Nordic LBP questionnaire, jeepney drivers (not MeSH)*

COMMENTARY

The current study did find out that there is a high prevalence (87.90 %) of low back pain (LBP) among public utility drivers in Metro Manila who drive continuously for prolonged periods of time. It has been reported that transient LBP was found to be prevalent among drivers of delivery vehicles. [1] The researchers of this study made use of the Nordic Low Back Pain Questionnaire to determine the prevalence of LBP among jeepney drivers. In order to allow respondents to provide more accurate information, the researchers translated the questionnaire to Filipino. Though the English version may have been established to be reliable and valid, it was not clear whether the researchers were able to validate the contents of the Filipino version of the questionnaire and this may have affected the results of the study.

Low back pain is caused by a myriad of factors. Prolonged driving and several physical and psychosocial factors are associated with high prevalence of LBP in taxi drivers.[2] Factors such as whole body vibration, prolonged sitting, awkward postures, lifting and carrying, and psychosocial issues may be implicated in the increased risk of drivers to develop back pain.[3] Thus, the use of another questionnaire that aimed at obtaining information on occupational patterns and working conditions was a good aspect of the study's methodology. The inclusion of questions on route taken, road conditions and other environmental conditions may have provided additional information on the factors that may have contributed to the development of low back pain in this population. The researchers were able to subject this questionnaire to content and face validation by asking experts in the field. Pilot testing prior to administration of the actual questionnaire would have helped obtain comments from prospective respondents as to how clear the questions are and whether they have similar understanding of the information the researchers are trying to gather.

Data obtained from the study were presented using descriptive statistics. Though these were helpful in giving the readers an idea as to what proportion of the tested population actually presented with low back pain is and the factors related to it, correlational statistics could have provided statistical basis for establishing the association of various factors to LBP.

This study provided valuable data on work-related low back pain that may be utilized for improving working conditions for a healthier workforce. The driver's seat should be appropriately designed to decrease discomfort and stress over the spine and ultimately improve over-all performance and productivity of the person. But the optimal ergonomic design for drivers of public utility vehicles has not been found yet. The use of low back support tended to limit the increase in LBP during driving though it was found to have no effect on low back and neck–shoulder subjective fatigue and neck–shoulder pain.[4] Since public utility drivers comprise quite a big number of our local workforce, high quality clinical studies should be conducted to establish effective ergonomic modifications that would reduce the development of work-related musculoskeletal disorders, such as low back pain, in this population. This move would definitely contribute to a more productive manpower for our society.

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Commentary

PREVALENCE OF BACK PAIN AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN THE CITY OF MANILA AND ITS ASSOCIATION TO BACKPACK USE

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ABSTRACT

Objective*:** To determine the prevalence of back pain among adolescent students in the city of Manila, the viability of the contributing factors to adolescent back pain, and the association of back pain to backpack use. ***Methods: Students aged 12 to 18 years old, recruited from different schools in the city of Manila were included in this study. Subjects were asked to answer a questionnaire regarding their health, activities, and bag use. Subjects' weight, height and bag load were also measured. Percentage of subjects with back pain defined the prevalence of back pain in this population. ***Results*:** One thousand six hundred eighteen students participated in the study, 40.11% of which reported to have back pain with the greater proportion in girls of 14 years of age. Independent t-tests showed that students with back pain seemed to be older, with higher BMI values, and carried heavier bag loads than those without back pain. Seventy-one percent of participants used back packs in school and there seems to be a significant association between presence of back pain in adolescents and use of back packs based on the chi-