

ABSTRACT

Low back pain has been found to be the most prevailing musculoskeletal condition as well as a common cause of disability in high and low income countries, with 85% prevalence. The aim of the current study was to determine the prevalence and factors contributing to chronic low back pain among patients attending the physiotherapy and orthopedic clinics of Mengo Hospital, Kampala in Uganda. A quantitative, cross-sectional and descriptive design was used to conduct the study. The study population and sample included patients attending the chosen clinics and total of 100 patients participated in the study and data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. A response rate of 100 (91%) was obtained. Data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the demographic data of the study sample, which were presented using frequency tables and expressed as percentages, means and standard deviations. Majority of female patients reported a high prevalence of low back pain with 52% as compared to their male counterparts with 48%.

Highest prevalence of low back pain is noted among patients aged between 21-30 years (27%), followed by patients aged between 41-50 years (26%), then those aged between 31-40 years (23%). Lastly, the lowest prevalence of low back pain is noted among below 21 years of age. The result showed that the majority affected fell under the class of occupation known as professionals (36%). The study shows that those who worked for longer hours reported more cases of chronic low back pain. 74% of the respondents worked for 9 hours or more.

The study further analysed the association between level of education achieved and prevalence of low back pain and results showed that low back pain was found more among patients who had achieved a higher level of education in a tertiary institution. About 9% had experienced pain during the last week whereas 37% had moderate pain, 29% mild pain and 26% reported severe pain. 38% were not taking any form of medication yet the most of them who were on medication reported minimal change in their condition (21%).

The study also explored the possibility of chronic back pain being linked to certain physical characteristics of those who suffered from it. The findings were as follows; 47 respondents which formed the largest category were overweight, 37 had normal body weight, 14 were obese and just a few were underweight (2%). This means that having a very high body weight can put xiii

an individual at risk of developing chronic low back pain hence having a very a BMI above 25 poses a risk to one's health. However, this study didn't show any significant association between smoking and chronic low back pain but a larger percentage of those who participated occasionally or regularly consumed alcohol. (66%).

Further well designated studies coupled with intervention studies to test the effectiveness of high quality interventions to inform and transform labour legislation policies to ensure better support for patients suffering from chronic low back pain at their workplaces.

Patients and unaffected individuals should be responsible for their own health by taking into account preventive measure and coping strategies against lifestyle and job related triggers of chronic low back pain which was found so prevalent among them.