

PR Croft et al. Pain. September (2001) Vol.93 #3 p 317.

Some studies show that the incidence and prevalence of chronic neck pain is no different in the trauma and no-trauma groups. 30% of EC and USA adults will experience neck pain in the course of 1 year, 5% to 10% will have a disabling neck problem.

This longitudinal study was designed to identify risk factors for neck pain in the general population.

7669 adults aged 18 to 75 took part in the study.

Participants were asked if they had experienced no neck pain lasting more than a day in the last month. These individuals entered the longitudinal study after completing questionnaires including GHQ, previous history, health perception.

Followed up for 12 months. Pain more than a day, was the outcome of interest.

At baseline, 3034 out of 4393 had no one-day neck pain in past month, i.e. 30% of a random population of adults have neck pain of more than 1 day duration in the past month. Participation rate was 65% suggesting some potential bias.

Participation rate at one year was 60%.

1403 still had no 24hr neck pain out of 1708. There were 305 new cases of 24hr neck pain suggesting an annual cumulative incidence = 17.9% (95% CI = 16 to 19.7)

Predictive factors associated with new 24-hr neck pain when measured at baseline (uni-variate model) were:

- ☐ widowed RR = 1.8 (95% CI = 1.1 to 2.8),
- ☐ 4 or more children RR = 1.7 (95% CI = 1.2 to 2.4),
- ☐ working part time RR = 1.6 (95% CI = 1.2 to 2.2),
- ☐ ill health/disability RR = 1.9 (95% CI = 1.2 to 2.9),
- ☐ poor perceived health RR = 2.4 (95% CI = 1.4 to 3.9),
- ☐ GHQ 18-36 RR = 2.0 (95% CI = 1.4 to 3.9),
- ☐ LBP RR = 2.0 (95% CI = 1.6 to 2.4),
- ☐ previous neck pain RR = 1.9 (95% CI = 1.4 to 2.7)

However, many of these factors were correlated with each other. In a multivariate model, the significant factors were 4 or more children, high GHQ score, LBP and previous NI, survive with statistical significance. RR for each of these was in the region of 1.6.

Comment

Freedom from one-day neck pain for one month is not the same as lifetime freedom or 1 year freedom.

Incident cases were not asked about any traumatic potential cause of neck pain. Incidence of neck pain is high and a high proportion of this can be attributed to innocent causes.

Other studies have confirmed that a high GHQ score, previous pain episodes and pain at another body site are good predictors of new and significant pain.

