

T Jacob et al. Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. June (2000) Vol. 82 #6 p 735.

A study of the reliability of pain and disability questionnaires when applied to LBP cases.

151 patients with LBP were asked to complete a set of questionnaires on two occasions, separated by 2 to 14 days.

The standard instruments were:

- Modified Roland Morris Disability questionnaire (MRMDQ),
- Verbal Pain Scale (VPS),
- Fear Avoidance Beliefs questionnaire (FABQ) and ,
- Baecke Physical Activity questionnaire (BPAQ).

Mean age 44(13), 55% women. Duration of pain was as follows: 28% of cases were between 1 week and 1 month, 67% > 1 month.



All tools showed no significant test-retest differences.

However, the anticipated correlation between scales was not found. For example there was no correlation between high disability scores and low activity scores.

Comment

The study provides support for the repeatability of the questionnaires, and by inference, the repeatability of the perceptions of the people with LBP. To some extent this is surprising as it would be expected that a high proportion of cases would significantly improve on this time-scale.

It was interesting that the scales did not correlate well. For example, physical activity might be expected to correlate with disability. Interpretation of the findings of these tools may not be as advertised.

Repeatability of results does not in any way lend support to their accuracy or utility in settling compensation claims.

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