

MS Kerr et al (C. Bombardier). American Journal of Public Health. July (2001) Vol.91 #7 p 1069.

A case control study of biological and psychosocial risk factors for reports of back pain at work

Subjects were selected from 137 cases who reported a new episode of LBP to their employer.

Proposed risk factors were measured by interview and measurements of task parameters.

The clearly statistically significant, specific risk factors were recorded as follows:

- Body Mass Index OR = 2.0 (95% CI = 1.2 to 3.6)
- Prior compensation claim OR = 2.2 (95% CI = 1.07 to 4.43)
- Perceived exertion at work OR = 3.0 (95% CI = 1.79 to 5.36)



After a somewhat complex analysis, the authors conclude that workplace physical factors were more predictive of a new complaint of LBP than were issues such as support from colleagues and job control, which were also significant. It is not clear that this is the most reasonable interpretation of the data.

Comment

Complaints of new back pain may not be closely related to the occurrence of new back pain.

It has been suggested that complaints are more related to general discomfort (physical and emotional) than to biomechanical risk factors. The basic findings of this report would appear to be consistent with this view.

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