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LOW BACK PAIN AND STRATIFIED MANAGEMENT: A NECESSITY

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Aims:

In industrial countries absenteeism and disability due to low back pain reach a peak between the ages of 30 and 50 years and thus affect a population reaching the age of career advancement.

Methods:

The number of low back pain employees in the Pays de la Loire region is assessed according to census data and by the epidemiological surveillance network for musculoskeletal disorders.

Results:

The number of employees with low back pain is very high, with more than 268,000 employees having backache during the preceding seven days and more than half a million with backache during the twelve months preceding the survey. As ten percent of people with non-specific low back pain risk having chronic low back pain in due course, this would involve 57,000 employees. On the basis of 250 places a year in all the rehabilitation centres in the region, this amounts to treating 0.5% of patients with low back pain.

Table 1. Low back pain in Pays de la Loire's employees

| | Pain during 12 last months | Pain during 7 last days |
|-------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Women | 244,253 | 118,503 |
| Men | 316,552 | 150,059 |
| Total | 560,805 | 268,561 |

Conclusion:

Although they prove effective in the short and medium term, functional rehabilitation programmes are costly and not appropriate for such large groups of patients.

It is therefore necessary to:

- Develop optimal treatments that specifically target the prognostic profiles of patients, combined with appropriate training for primary care physiotherapists. Early management of persistent non-specific low back pain (beyond six weeks) would prevent transition to chronic back pain.
- Identify patients with poor prognosis that require targeting and more complex treatment with bio-psycho-social management. This type of management must be reserved for patients with severe handicap or poor prognosis.

In view of the fact that the prevalence of chronic low back pain has increased 2.6-fold in the last fifteen years, and that resort to treatment increases for the same level of incapacity, it is urgent to change our management of such patients.

Keywords: Disability prevention, public policy, back, low back

References:

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