

LOW BACK PAIN IN MEDICAL STUDENTS, BY SEXES: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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DOI: 10.5937/BatutPHCO24156I

Background: Due to a very demanding curriculum during their studies, medical students are exposed to stress, a sedentary lifestyle and long hours in hospital wards which can lead to the occurrence of low back pain in this population. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of low back pain in medical students.

Objectives and Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out at Faculty of Medical Sciences in Kragujevac. Our study comprised undergraduate medical students (n=499/547; 91.2% participation rate). Main outcome was the prevalence of self-reported low back pain. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to determine odds ratio (OR) with 95% confidence interval (95% CI).

Results: The overall prevalence of low back pain among the students was 63.1% (n = 318). Prevalence among males and females was 16.8% and 22.8%, respectively (p>0.05). In female medical students, significant association was found between prevalence of low back pain and cigarette smoking (OR=3.56; 95%CI=1.91-6.6, p<0.000), and positive family history for low back pain (OR=2.37; 95%CI=1.31-4.27, p=0.004). In male medical students, no significant association was found between the prevalence of low back pain and the observed variables.

Conclusions: There is a high lifetime prevalence of low back pain in medical students, associated with smoking and positive family history for low back pain among females. Education on the importance of adopting healthy lifestyle habits, as well as education on other preventive measures could contribute to the reduction of the number of people suffering from lower back pain.

Keywords: low back pain; medical students; prevalence