Author's response to reviews

Title: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Outcomes of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders: A Survey Among Physical Therapists in the State of Kuwait.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Detailed Responses to Reviewers

We would like to sincerely thank the reviewers for their time and thought to improve our manuscript

Reviewer: Deborah Alperovitch-Najenson

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The article deals with an important issue, work-related musculoskeletal disorders. The main problem, as I see it, is that data analyses is missing the explanation of how work-related musculoskeletal disorders were differed from non-work related musculoskeletal disorders (table 3 and table 4). Moreover, I believe that such data cannot be achieved through a questionnaire. There is a possibility that this differentiation is the reason for results such as no relationship was found between physical activity and musculoskeletal disorders. Surveying the prevalence of the non-work related musculoskeletal disorders was not the major objective of the study. However, it is the topic of ongoing research project, with in-depth analysis of non-work related musculoskeletal disorders and WMSDs differences. For the current study, reference to non-work related musculoskeletal disorders was removed.

2. It is a pity that the psycho-social part of the questionnaire was not used. It might give the article the necessary innovation. This is the focus of ongoing research project

3. Concerning the objective of the study, to determine the prevalence, characteristics and outcome of WMSDs among PTs in the state of Kuwait, There is no real WMSDs outcome in the results. Such outcome would be for example functioning decline, which was not measured in this study. The impact on WMSDs on work in term of sickness, change of work habits and areas of practice, and decline in number of patient contact were the focus of the study. Functioning decline was not measured.
Reviewer: Babatunde Adegoke

Discretionary Revisions

Title:
1. The title of the article does not capture its whole essence since the work also included non-work related musculoskeletal disorders. The title should be revised to include non-work related disorders. The title may read thus “Prevalence, characteristics and outcome of work and non-work related musculoskeletal disorders: a survey of physical therapists in the State of Kuwait”. Surveying the prevalence of the non-work related musculoskeletal disorders was not the major objective of this study. Therefore, the reference to this point in the title and results was removed. Future ongoing research will report the prevalence of non-work related musculoskeletal disorders and WMSDs with in-depth analysis of any differences. Therefore, the title was not changed.

Abstract:
2. Pg2 line 2- Change ‘risk for’ to ‘risk of’. Changed

Background:
3. Pg 3 line 29- Change ‘health care professionals’ to ‘and other health care professionals’. Or are physical therapists not health care professionals? Changed
4. Pg 3 line 38: Recast the sentence to read ‘These findings contradict the findings from other studies –’ Changed
5. Pg 4 line 54 & pg 5 line 67: Replace ‘questionnaires’ with ‘questionnaire’. Replaced

Participants’ description:
7. Pg 5 line 83: Change ‘fewer’ to ‘lesser’. Changed

Prevalence rate of WMSDs
9. Pg 6 lines 92, 107: Replace ‘common’ with ‘prevalent’. Replaced
10. Pg 6 line 112: Replace ‘frequencies’ with ‘prevalence’ in line with the title of the work. Replaced throughout the text
11. Pg 7 lines 114 & 115: Insert the symbol for Chi square test. Inserted. However, it was PDF system malfunction for the previous submitted manuscript.

Demographics, work settings, and exercise habits
13. Pg 9 line 172: Replace ‘women and men’ with ‘female and male’ respectively. Replaced throughout the text
14. Pg 10 lines 182, 192, 193, & 199: Replace ‘frequency’ with ‘prevalence’ Replaced
15. Pg 11 line 205: Format the title to read ‘WMSDs’ impact on work’. Formatted according to suggestion
Minor essential revisions

16. Reconcile the use of the terms ‘incidence’ and ‘prevalence’ in several areas of the manuscript e.g. Pg 2 line 3, pg 8 line 146, & pg 10 line 193. The two terms are not synonyms and should not be used as such. Replaced throughout the text

17. Correct the misuse of the word ‘correlation’ instead of ‘association’. See pg 6 lines 94, 97, 99, 103, &105. Also, see pg 7 line 113, pg 8 line 157 and pg 9 line 168. Authors should please note that Chi square test is a test of association not correlation. Corrected throughout the text

Major compulsory revisions

Abstract

18. The study’s conclusion should be based on the study’s findings only. The authors should hence delete the following statement from the conclusion: ‘The factors associated with these disorders remain unknown’. Deleted

19. What sample size was used to calculate the reported prevalence rates? Was it the 222 reported in the abstract or the 212 reported under results? The authors should not report just percentages but accompany them with the absolute figures to enable readers ascertain the correctness or otherwise of the reported percentages. 222 was the sample size used to calculate the response rate. On the other hand, 212 was the sample size used to calculate the prevalence rates.

Background

20. The background appears inconclusive as it failed to present a research problem and hence justify the need for the study. The prevalence of lower back WMSDs among Physical Therapists in the State of Kuwait is well documented. However, the prevalence of WMSDs in others anatomical region remain unknown. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the prevalence, characteristics, and outcome of WMSDs in all areas of the body. The background has been re-written to better justify the need for the study.

21. To justify the inclusion of non-work related musculoskeletal disorders under results, the background section should include at least a paragraph on non-work related musculoskeletal disorders. Surveying the prevalence of the non-work related musculoskeletal disorders was not the major objective of the study. The results pertaining to non-work related musculoskeletal disorders was removed. No background relevant to this point will presented.

Participants

22. The authors should explain how they obtained their random sample in spite of their inclusion criteria. Statement was reworded

23. Was it the study’s protocol or the informed consent form that was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Kuwait University? Please clarify. The study’s protocol and the informed consent form were approved by the Ethical Review Board of Kuwait University. Statements were added in the text.
Procedures

24. Was the questionnaire administered to all 350 physical therapists that met the study’s inclusion criteria? Please reconcile this with the random sample mentioned under participants. How many physical therapists are in Kuwait? Three hundred fifty physical therapists out of 650 physical therapists working in public and private practices were randomly invited to participate in the study. They have at least one year of work experience in their current working practice setting.

Results

25. Why was the questionnaire administered on 10 participants who did not meet an inclusion criterion for the study i.e. one year job experience? Please defend this lapse as it calls to question the diligence with which data collection was pursued. These participants were working at varied practice settings for the last 12 months. They have one year of work experience, but they have not been in their current working practice setting for the last year. We believed work setting will affect prevalence of WMSDs, therefore they were excluded.

26. The result presentation was unduly long as authors chose to repeat virtually all information on their tables thereby defeating the purpose of tables. Please present highlights of your findings in the text and refer readers to appropriate tables for further details. The text and tables have been revised.

27. When presenting prevalence rates, the authors should delete ‘n’ and = before the figures and put the percentages in parentheses thus: 40(19%) instead of (n-40, 19%). Deleted

Discussion

28. The first paragraph of the discussion looks like the study’s conclusion. It should hence be moved to replace the current conclusion which looks like recommendation. Moved

Demographics work settings and exercise habits

29. The authors may consider higher work load as a plausible reason for the higher prevalence of lower back complaints in younger physical therapists. This point was added to the discussion.

30. Superior clinical judgement appears to be more relevant to choice of interventions and hence eventual outcome rather than prevalence of back pain in physical therapists. Sentence was deleted.

WMSDs’ impact on work

31. The authors should delete Table 5 from line 2 of this section as it is not customary to refer to tables under discussion. Deleted

32. Please justify your inference that ‘work duties were not affected by musculoskeletal disorders’ considering that you reported that 25% of the participants had sick leave because of WMSDs. Table 4 indicate that the majority of physical therapists did not take sick leave. The 25% represent overall estimate of all physical therapists with WMSDs who took sick leave, leaving at least 75% of physical therapists attending work.
Conclusion
33. This needs to be rewritten to capture the real findings from the study. The authors may create another section to accommodate their recommendation for further research. The Conclusion have been re-written.

Tables
34. The titles of tables 2 & 3 should be rephrased to reflect that they are reporting tests of association. Rephased.

35. Also for tables 3 & 4, Fishers exact test should be performed when the expected counts in a cell are less than 5. Table 3 is deleted in the revised manuscript and no tests of association was performed in table 4.

Other comments
36. Please highlight the limitations of the study. For instance, the ease of differentiating between work and non-work related musculoskeletal disorders and recall problem. Limitations of the study were added under the Limitation Section.

37. Discuss the implications of your findings for clinical practice. Implications of findings were added under Conclusion Section.