Reviewer’s report

Title: Factors associated with the prevalence of back pain and work absence in shipyard workers

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Reviewer: Prawit Janwantanakul

Reviewer’s report:

Risk factors for back pain in shipyard workers

This paper described a study investigating risk factors for back pain in shipyard workers. The paper would be of interest to readers in this area by providing more detailed in several sections and in-depth discussion of the findings (see details below). Additionally, the title should be modified to represent what was studied (e.g. the whole body versus the back, prevalence versus incidence).

Introduction

* Essentially, the introduction lacks details regarding literature review relating to shipyard. In other words, reports regarding the prevalence of the disease in shipyard workers, risk factors, and impact of having the disease should be included.

* My main concern relates to the reason for conducting this study. The reason for conducting the study should relate to a gap of knowledge in this area or the contribution of the study to the literature.

* The specific objectives of the study are also required.

Methods

* Characteristics of participants should be moved to the result section.

* Please provide information how participants were selected in the study.

* Which type of research design was this study? Was it cross-sectional or prospective study?

* How was back pain defined in this study? How was the body region defined? How many body regions were studied? Which prevalence was collected in this study?

* I wonder about the reliability of information collected. It relies heavily on memory. Should this be one of limitations of this study? In fact, the authors collected several subjective data. Another limitation of the study?
* Did the authors collect data regarding psychosocial factors, which are generally accepted to be one of important risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders?

* More details regarding statistical analysis should be added, i.e. how the regression was carried out in step-by-step fashion and number of missing data and its management.

* What is the difference between "the relationship between the existence of pain and work absence" and "the relationship between pain in the back and each subject's absence from work"? Please clarify.

Results

* I have difficulty to understand the results of the study. Would it be easier to understand and more completed to provide descriptive information in tables?

* When reading the results, I am still not sure what I should expect between the prevalence or incidence. Also, what is the period of prevalence or incidence in this current study?

Discussion

* My comments on the discussion section of the study are limited due to my confusion about the results of the study.

* Discussion is required for the differences in the findings between the present and previous studies for the 12-month prevalence/incidence and the associations between MSP and risk factors.

* The fact that different occupations are exposed to different working conditions and the nature of work has influenced the health of workers may have an implication on risk factors for MSDs. Risk factors for the onset of MSDs in a sub-population may be a subset of risk factors identified in a general population or occupation-specific. Thus, discussion of the current study should be focused to shipyard workers as much as possible. This concept is also applied to body region, i.e. risk factors for the back is different from the upper limbs in the same occupation. Revision to the discussion section may be required.

* Some separated discussion of the findings related to the existence of pain and absence for work would be helpful to understand the findings of the study.

* The limitation of the study and further study recommended are required towards the end of the discussion section.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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