Prevalence of back pain among professional drivers in Abu Dhabi
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ABSTRACT

Aims:
• The principle aim of the study was to examine whether being a driver would lead to an increase in the risk of back pain from the general population by ascertaining the prevalence of back pain among the professional drivers in Abu Dhabi (UAE) and to compare it to the prevalence of back pain in the general population.

• To investigate whether the type of vehicle driven was a risk factor for back pain by comparing the prevalence of back pain among taxi drivers to the prevalence of back pain among bus drivers and heavy vehicle drivers.

Method: It was a cross-sectional study that looked into the following:

• Prevalence of back pain among professional drivers in Abu Dhabi
• Comparing the prevalence of back pain between taxi drivers, bus drivers and heavy vehicles
• All professional drivers attend Al Madina Occupational Health Centre (Abu Dhabi) for all types of medical assessments (Pre-employment, periodic, fitness to return to work or fitness for the extension of services) who agreed to participate were included in the study.
• The study ran from January 2015 up to May 2015
• The sample size was 499
• Data was collected by a self-filled questionnaire, which had been modified from a validated New Zealand acute low back pain questionnaire (permission taken).

The questionnaire included general demographic data, work details and back pain information.

Results: The study was carried out in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The study population was 499 (the response rate was 92%). 27 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete or missed information. The rest were 472 drivers, 141 of whom disclosed back pain in the
previous 12 month, giving a prevalence of 29.9%. From those with back pain 92% denied any other health problems that affected their back. 82% described their pain as mild and 80.9% mentioned that minor physical activity did not make their pain worse. 87.2% declared that, they could do light work for an hour without pain being a problem.

In this study some occupational factors were investigated with relation to back pain in professional drivers. It showed that working hours > 8 hours per day, working days >5 days per week and years of driving >10 years, are significantly associated with increased back pain in professional drivers ($p$ value 0.004) less than 0.05. It also showed that prevalence of back pain increased with long distance driving ($p$ value 0.001). Other factors such as BMI >25 were also associated with increased risk of back pain in professional drivers. The study showed that smoking, marital status and psychological factors (yellow flags) had no relation with increased risk of back pain. This study showed that prevalence of back pain differs between the types of drivers. It also showed that heavy vehicle drivers have more risk of back pain compared to taxi and bus drivers.