Family history of low back pain is a significant predictor of pain and disability between extreme stages of lumbar disc degeneration

Author(s)  
Samartzis, D; Bow, HYC; Karppinen, JI; Luk, KDK; Cheung, BMY; Cheung, KMC

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FAMILY HISTORY OF LOW BACK PAIN IS A SIGNIFICANT PREDICTOR OF PAIN AND DISABILITY BETWEEN EXTREME STAGES OF LUMBAR DISC DEGENERATION

Samartzis D,1 Bow C,1 Karppinen J,2 Luk KDK,1 Cheung BMY,3 Cheung KMC1

1Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
2Institute of Clinical Medicine, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland
3Department of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION: This large-scale population-based study addressed the role of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) findings, lifestyle / environmental / cardiovascular factors, and low back pain (LBP) family history in extreme stages of lumbar disc degeneration (i.e. non-degenerated [normal] vs. moderate / severe disc degeneration) on MRI as well as LBP occurrence.

METHODS: This was a cross-sectional study of the Hong Kong Disc Degeneration-Cardiovascular Cohort which composed of 1800 Southern Chinese volunteers. The study entailed 2 groups: Group 1 (n=229) included non-degenerated discs and Group 2 (n=335) included moderate / severe global disc degeneration. Blood chemistry, anthropometric, lifestyle / environmental as well as pain profiles were obtained.

RESULTS: In Group 1, multivariate regression modelling noted that LBP family history (odds ratio [OR], 3.80; 95% confidence interval [95% CI], 1.43-10.04; p=0.007), younger age (0.92; 0.89-1.01; p=0.069), and elevated high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (1.26; 0.91-1.73; p=0.17) were related to LBP. Regarding Group 2, multivariate regression model noted that male gender (14.84; 1.30-169.70; p=0.030), younger age (0.80; 0.68-0.96; p=0.014), and elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate (1.11; 1.01-1.23; p=0.032) were significantly associated with LBP. The LBP family history was the predominant factor significantly associated with abnormal functional / disability scores in both groups (p<0.05).

CONCLUSIONS: This study illustrated for the first time why certain individuals developed LBP, irrespective of MRI findings, which largely attributed to LBP family history.