



Musculoskeletal

Recurrence after an acute episode of low back pain

What are the predictors?

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Despite the worldwide burden of low back pain (LBP) and its top place in disability rankings, there is still a significant variability in terms of reported recurrence rates. Moreover, evidence of recurrence predictors, especially in individuals not already in a chronic pain state, is lacking.

This study found a 1-year LBP recurrence rate of 33%. This value dropped to 18% when considering only cases requiring medical care. Experiencing more than 2 episodes of LBP was found to increase risk of recurrence, regardless of the need for medical care.

No other of the analyzed factors were found to be predictors of LBP recurrence over 1 year after an acute episode.

A total of 999 patients reporting to primary care facilities with acute moderate LBP participated in this study. 1-year recurrence rates were calculated and the following factors were tested for their predictive ability:

- sociodemographics;
- current history;
- general health;
- work status;
- yellow flags.

A third of the included patients experienced recurrence; half of those sought medical care.

Of all the predictors, only having 2 or more episodes was found to predict recurrence, tripling the risk.

The authors warn, however, that the reported recurrence may be influenced by recall bias, since the participants were contacted only after 1 year.



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