

Study on the effect of physical therapy on chronic mechanical low back pain

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Background

It is estimated that the lifetime prevalence of low back pain among adults is between 65%-80%¹. According to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2012, it is the number one cause for years lived with disability worldwide².

Objectives

To identify the level of disability caused by low back pain and to describe the effect of physical therapy modalities on low back pain.

Methodology

An analytical observational study was done on 40 patients attending the outpatient clinic at Rheumatology and Rehabilitation hospital, Ragama. Each patient had undergone a physical therapy programme consisting of heat therapy, flexibility training and strengthening of back muscles together with instructions on back discipline. **All patients were on pharmacological management.** The level of disability was assessed using Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire before and after completion of therapy. Student t test was used to assess the significance of the difference in level of disability before and after the therapy. **Was the Pharmacological treatment kept unchanged during the study?**

Results

Majority of participants were females (92%), with the mean age of 48. 62%(25) had severe disability and 37%(15) had moderate disability. The mean scoring in Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability score prior to the institute of physical therapy was 31%. Following physical therapy the level of disability had improved by an average of 18% which was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion and future work

Physical therapy has significant effect on improving the disability due to low back pain however further studies including larger sample sizes should be conducted to provide consistent evidence.