

Prevalent neck and back pain are associated with pain also 5 years later in elderly men

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Purpose: Identify subgroups of elderly men at high risk for developing long-standing severe neck and low back pain (LBP).

Methods: MrOs Sweden is an observational study that includes 3,014 men aged 69-81 years. 1,962 men participated at the 5-year follow-up. Participants reported neck and LBP (including severity), rhizopathy/sciatica, or motor deficits during the previous year.

Results: One-year prevalence of neck pain was 29%. Among those with pain, 18% experienced severe pain (13% of those with only neck pain, 24% of those with pain+rhizopathy, and 46% of those with pain+rhizopathy+motor deficits; $p<0.001$). Men with neck pain had a relative risk (RR) of 4.0 (95% CI:3.4-4.6) for having neck pain 5 years later, and men with severe neck pain had an RR of 10.7 (95% CI:7.5-15.1) for having severe neck pain 5 years later. One-year prevalence of LBP was 45%. Among those with pain, 22% experienced severe pain (10% of those with only LBP, 17% of those with LBP+sciatic and 45% of those with LBP+sciatic+motor deficits; $p<0.001$). Men with LBP had an RR of 2.8 (95% CI:2.5-3.1) for having LBP 5 years later, and men with severe LBP had an RR of 6.5 (95% CI:4.9-8.6) for having severe LBP 5 years later.

Conclusion: Neck and LBP are common in elderly men, but few experience severe pain. The results point to the possibility of identifying subgroups at high risk for long-standing, severe neck and LBP, potentially suitable for interventions.