Work, Worry, and Wonder: Understanding Risk Factors for Neck Pain in Medical Students
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Poster Category: Original Research

BACKGROUND/AIM:
To determine risk factors for the presence of acute neck pain among medical students. Understanding relationships between demographics, lifestyle, and stressors relative to neck pain can identify students at risk, permitting a targeted approach to treatment and prevention.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:
Surveys were administered to first through fourth year students at NYIT College of osteopathic medicine at the start of the academic year. Analysis was conducted in SPSS using logistic regression to determine odds ratios for neck pain in the last 4 weeks. Severity of neck pain was evaluated using linear regression.

RESULTS:
Among respondents (N=610), females were 2.55 times more likely than males to report neck pain within the last 30 days, and were also more likely to report a higher average severity in pain. Students reporting stress within the last 4 weeks had a 1.73 fold increase in presence of neck pain, and higher stress levels were associated with increased severity of pain. Additionally, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year medical students were 2.36 times more likely to report having neck pain relative to 1st year students, and were also more likely to report pain as more severe (p <0.01). Study hours, age, race, and exercise were not significantly associated with neck pain.

CONCLUSION:
Gender, stress, and class year appear to be significant risk factors for acute neck pain among medical students. Awareness of risk can help direct preventative therapies. Further research is needed to assess the most effective strategies to minimize onset and severity of neck pain.

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