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Prevalence of low back pain and work related ergonomic risk factors and its impact on sickness absence, work performance and social life among shipyard of Arab contractors' workers in Ismailia city in Egypt

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Background: Low back pain (LBP) is the most prevalent musculoskeletal disorder. It has a marked effect on the patient and on society. In shipyard industry, it includes many ergonomic risk factors may causing it.

Objectives: To identify the prevalence of the low back pain, its risk factors, its sickness absence and impact on work performance and social life.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out on 226 blue collar and 226 white collar workers by using an interview structured questionnaire adapted from the Dutch Musculoskeletal Questionnaire.

Results: The mean age of blue collar workers was 41.15 ± 5.81 , 95.1% of them were married while the mean age of white collar workers was 40.82 ± 10.97 , 85.5% of them were married. LBP prevalence in the last year was 46%. It was more prevalent in blue collar workers (50%) compared to 42% in white collar workers. Regarding LBP risk factors, the following risk factors were significant (p value < 0.05) including age, vibration, pushing, pulling or carrying heavy weights more than 5kg. Lifting in an uncomfortable position, lifting with twisted trunk, lifting with one hand and body posture such as heavily twisting for long periods, bending heavily with trunk, bending and twisting for long periods at same time and raising hand above the shoulder level were with p value < 0.05 . In addition, sudden unexpected movement, operating pedals with feet, laying on back were also significant. Regarding sick leaves, 8.2 % of all workers with LBP took sick leaves in the past year due to LBP. LBP affects 42.8 % of workers with LBP performance at work and 63.5% of their social life.

Conclusion: A high proportion of shipyard workers experienced low back pain and several work related factors posed significant relationships with LBP. LBP has an effect on performance at work and their social life. A good occupational safety programme should be applied for better protection and productivity.

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