Weight Reduction as an Intervention for Low Back Pain: Systematic Review and Implications for Physical Therapy Practice

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STUDY PURPOSE

To review the most current literature on treatment interventions for low back pain and determine if weight management is among the interventions used.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

• Low back pain is the number two reason Americans see their healthcare professional – second only to colds and flu.

• Low back pain is defined as, “acute or chronic pain in the lumbar or sacral regions, which may be associated with musculo-ligamentous sprains and strains; intervertebral disk displacement; and other conditions”.

• Unhealthy lifestyle behaviours are primary contributors to the prevalence of lifestyle-related conditions, including low back pain, this century.

• New theories suggest weight loss may reduce the harmful effects of added load on the spine that cause altered biomechanics and increased potential for early degeneration.

• Current treatment for low back pain does not involve the use of weight management as an intervention.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

• Systematic Review
• MeSH terms used in EMBASE
• Limited to RCT, human, English, past year (June 2011-2012)
• Hand exclusion of unrelated articles based on title and abstract.

RESULTS

• Weight is often measured as a baseline outcome of research but is not followed up with or used as a treatment intervention.

• Physiotherapists should work to effect long-term lifestyle behaviour change to improve health and physical therapy outcomes.

• Weight management should be considered a first-line intervention for low back pain.

• More research into the effectiveness of physiotherapists addressing weight management as an intervention for low back pain is required.

REFERENCES


