

Physicians Report Disparities Between Men And Women In Causes Of Acute Back Pain And Muscle Spasm

(NAPSA)—A new survey of physicians who regularly treat back pain, the second most common reason people visit a doctor, reveals that there are significant differences between men and women when it comes to identifying the causes of their discomfort.

Nearly half of the 200 primary care physicians who participated in the SPASM (Survey of Physicians About Sufferers of Musculoskeletal Pain) survey report that the majority of male patients with acute back pain attribute their symptoms to a job-related injury. Doctors say women most often complain of back pain associated with activities around the home, such as housework, gardening or childcare.

"The source of acute low back pain is not always clear, but the majority of episodes result in muscle spasm," said Gerard Malanga, M.D., Director of Sports, Spine and Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in New Jersey. "The good news, however, is that with the appropriate treatment, nearly 90 percent of patients will fully recover in about two months."

Fifty-eight percent of physicians treat acute back pain by prescribing a muscle relaxant at some point in their therapy. Most physicians believe patients who take a muscle relaxant return to normal activities sooner than those who do not.

"Rest periods longer than two days have not been shown to be effective and can actually slow recovery from back pain," said Dr. Malanga. "The sooner a back pain sufferer obtains relief, the sooner normal activity can be resumed."

Doctors also report that men complain of exercise- and sports-



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related back pain injuries more often than women do. Physicians cite weightlifting as the most common exercise-related cause of acute back pain for men, followed by golf, basketball and football. More than a third of physicians say female patients identify running as the most common exercise-related cause of their back pain, followed by tennis and weightlifting.

The survey also found:

- Seventy-four percent of physicians report that patients say the pain interferes with daily activity such as work, school or leisure at least "most of the time."

- Virtually all physicians refer at least some of their acute back pain patients to specialists and half of those refer to a physical therapist "always" or "most" of the time. Orthopedic surgeons are the second most likely specialty to be used for referrals.

- 31 percent of physicians agree that most acute back pain sufferers wait too long before seeing a doctor.

For more information, visit www.spasmreport.com.