

P6

PREVALENCE OF MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN AND ASSOCIATED DISABILITY IN THREE COHORTS OF BRAZILIAN WORKERS

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Objectives Musculoskeletal disorders are a major cause of disability and incapacity for work in developed countries, but less is known about their frequency in developing countries. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of musculoskeletal symptoms and associated disability in three occupational populations in Brazil, as part of the multi-national CUPID study.

Methods The target population comprised 200 nursing staff (NS), 300 sugar cane cutters (SCC), and 300 video terminal operators (VTO). With approval from the local Ethics Committee

and after obtaining written informed consent, data were collected from participants at interview, using the standardised CUPID questionnaire. The prevalence of health outcomes between occupational groups was assessed by the χ^2 test.

Results and conclusions In total, 666 (83.3%) subjects answered the questionnaire: 96% of the NS, 60.6% of the SCC and 97.3% of VTO. Most subjects were female (83.2%), 41.4% of them were less than 41 years old. Overall, 55.8% of participants reported low back pain in the past year, 43.1% neck pain, 42.3% shoulder pain, 18.9% elbow pain, 36.4% wrist/hand pain, and 28.9% knee pain. There were significant differences between occupational groups in the 12-month prevalence of pain in the back, neck, wrist, elbow and knee ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, differences were observed in the one-month prevalence of pain in the back and neck ($p < 0.001$), shoulder ($p = 0.005$), elbow ($p = 0.004$), wrists ($p = 0.026$), and knees ($p = 0.056$). The VTO reported musculoskeletal symptoms more frequently, but the NS and SCC registered more absence from work because of musculoskeletal pain.