

N° 177 DEVELOPMENT OF THE RETURN-TO-WORK SELF-EFFICACY (RTWSE)

QUESTIONNAIRE: PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES AND PREDICTIVE VALIDITY

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Aims

Poor expectations for recovery have been shown to be a self-fulfilling prophecy among working adults with low back pain (LBP), but more reliable and valid measures are needed to study the specific psychological mechanisms underlying this phenomena. Self-efficacy, the "belief in one's abilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments"(Bandura,1997), may be a useful paradigm for understanding return-to-work efforts.

Methods

Based on qualitative results with back-injured workers (focus groups, n=28, and semi-structured interviews, n=23)(Shaw & Huang, 2005), the authors compiled a 28-item Return-to-Work Self-Efficacy (RTWSE) questionnaire with the goal of assessing perceived capabilities of patients to return to work within three conceptual domains: (1) meeting job demands; (2) controlling pain at work; and (3) obtaining help. The pilot scale was completed by 293 patients (61% male, mdn age 35) who were participating in an inception cohort study of acute, work-related LBP.

Results

The full response range (1-10) was utilized on all 28 items, and there were no ceiling or floor effects. Mean item scores ranged from 4.7 ("reducing physical workload) to 8.3 ("describing injury to supervisor"). An exploratory factor analysis (using principal component with varimax rotation) supported 3 underlying factors (eigenvalues>1.0), but item loadings suggested an alternative labeling of: (1) meeting job demands (16 items); (2) modifying job tasks (8 items); and (3) communicating needs to others (4 items). Internal consistency (alpha) for the 3 scales were 0.98, 0.90, and 0.77, respectively. In week 2, mean self-efficacy scores improved for meeting job demands (6.3 vs. 5.6) and modifying job tasks (5.5 vs. 5.1), but not for communicating needs (6.9 vs. 7.0). At 3-month follow-up, both RTW (80%) and continuing work limitations were predicted by RTWSE assessed in week 2 (p

Conclusion

A final 16-item version of the RTWSE has adequate reliability and validity to assess the confidence of working adults with LBP to meet job demands, modify job tasks, and communicate needs to co-workers and supervisors. Administration in the second week after LBP onset may provide a more useful prognostic indicator. Future studies might test how RTWSE interacts with other prognostic factors to influence RTW outcomes.

Reference 1 :

Bandura A. Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York: WH Freeman; 1997. p 279-313.

Reference 2 :

Shaw WS, Huang YH. Concerns and expectations about returning to work with low back pain: Identifying themes from focus groups and semi-structured interviews. *Disabil Rehabil.* 2005;27:1269-81.

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