PREVALENCE OF MUSCULOSKELETAL COMPLAINTS AND DISABILITY IN TUNISIA: A WHO-ILAR COPCORD STUDY


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Objectives: To determine the prevalence of musculoskeletal complaints and disability in Tunisian population, in the absence of equivalent data in Africa.

Methods: A prospective transversal epidemiological study included in a wide longitudinal survey was conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of the Public Health on a Tunisian population. Were proportionally involved all Tunisian regions. The Community Oriented Program for Control of Rheumatic Diseases (COPCORD) Stage I was carried out in the households drawn out urban and rural regions. The WHO-ILAR Core questionnaire was applied by primary health care workers at the last home visit of the longitudinal survey.

Results: The non response rate was estimated at 1.8% of the households. The prevalence of musculoskeletal complaints was 31.1% among the 1582 investigated subjects (36.7 ± 21 yr) and 38.7% among those aged 15 years and above (51.9 ± 17.9 yr). There was no difference between rural and urban populations, while a significant higher prevalence was found in Tunisian women (43.2% vs 29.1%, p<0.001). The most common symptomatic sites were knees (19.3%), lumbar spine (15.9%) and shoulders (8.7%). The intensity of pain was described as high in 34.3% and moderate in 48.4%. Functional disability was reported in 60% of the symptomatic subjects and 16.2% of these had stopped their professional activities. Forty one subjects (2.6%), aged 38.6 ± 22.2 yr [5 – 85], indicated a fracture that occurred during the last year.

Conclusion: The prevalence of musculoskeletal complaints in Tunisia seems to be among the highest compared to those of other countries that used the COPCORD program. It was close to those noticed in Australia, Brazil, Kuwait and Thailand.