

19. A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON LOWER BACK PAIN AMONGST MEDICAL STUDENTS AND FOUNDATION DOCTORS IN MALTA

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 <https://www.youtube.com/live/fSpXH-3Xy5w?t=13111s>

INTRODUCTION: Lower back pain (LBP) is one of the most common health problems and a significant global burden on both an individual and economic level. It is especially prevalent amongst healthcare workers and students, partly due to working conditions. This study aimed to investigate the prevalence and common risk factors of LBP amongst medical students and foundation doctors in Malta.

METHODS: A mixed-methods cross-sectional, online questionnaire based on the Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire was distributed to medical students and foundation doctors in Malta. Quantitative

data was analyzed by means of Chi-squared test followed by multivariate analysis, whilst qualitative data was organized into broad themes. **RESULTS:** A total of 319 individuals participated in the questionnaire. The 12-month and 7-day prevalence of lower back pain in the sample population overall is 78.14% and 28.71% respectively. Females and students who worked during medical school were more likely to have LBP ($p < 0.001$ and $p = 0.040$ respectively). Long working/studying hours and awkward sitting/standing postures were identified as contributors to LBP by participants. **CONCLUSIONS:** Lower back pain is a highly prevalent issue amongst medical students and foundation doctors in Malta. If unaddressed, it will continue to contribute to disability, decreased quality of life and reduced career longevity. An approach based on Human Factors and Ergonomics principles focusing on ergonomic design and ergonomics training in medical school can lead to improved staff wellbeing and increase patient safety and efficiency.

Key Words: Lower back pain, prevalence, medical students, doctors, Malta.