

**BACK PAIN AS A CAUSE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE COMPARED TO ALL OTHER DISEASE GROUPS IN GREEK ADULT GENERAL POPULATION**

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**Objectives:** To assess the frequency of prescription drug use (PDU) due to back pain or to any other disorder in Greek adult general population was one of the objectives of a population-based epidemiological study of the rheumatic diseases in Greece (ESORDIG study).

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study was carried out in 2 urban, 2 suburban and 5 rural communities, located in north, central and south Greece, and having a total adult population of 14,233 subjects. All adult (>18-years-old) residents of 2 urban, one suburban and 4 rural communities (8,547 subjects) were included in the study, as well as 2,100 out of 5,686 randomly selected adults from one suburban (1:3) and one rural (1:2) community. The study was based on a standardized questionnaire, clinical evaluation and laboratory investigation, when necessary, and was performed by rheumatologists, who visited the target population at their homes. The questionnaire included distinct questions about PDU due to back pain (including low back pain and neck pain) or to any other disorder during the 2- week period immediately prior to the interview.

**Results:** Of the target population (10,647 adults), 8,740 subjects participated in the study (response rate 82.1%). The age and sex adjusted prevalence of PDU due to back pain in the total target adult general population was 2.9% (95% CI 2-6-3.2) and it was significantly higher among women (3.1%, 95% CI 2.8-3.4) than men (2.6%, 95% CI 2.3-2.9) ( $p<0.049$ ). The age and sex adjusted prevalence of PDU due to back pain increased with age up to and including the 45-64 year-old group ( $p<0.0005$ ), and then declined slightly. The overall age and sex adjusted prevalence of PDU due to any disorder in the general population was 29.8%. Regarding the causes of PDU, back pain was the fourth most common cause (9.6%), following cardiovascular diseases (29.6%), endocrine-metabolic diseases (15.8%) and the group of other rheumatic diseases (14.4%). Analysis for age and sex showed that in the 19-44 year-old group and among men, back pain was the first most common cause of PDU (18.8%), and the difference wasn't significant from the second cause (respiratory diseases, 15.7%), but it was significant from the third one (other rheumatic diseases, 11.1%) ( $p<0.013$ ). In the same age group and among women, back pain was the second most common cause of PDU (12.6%), differing significantly from the first cause (endocrine-metabolic diseases, 19.3%,  $p<0.021$ ), but not from the third one (respiratory diseases, 10.5%).

**Conclusion:** These findings show that back pain ranks fourth as a cause of prescription drug use in the adult general population, but first or second among adult

men or women, respectively, under the age of 45 years; almost one out of 5 men and one out of 8 women of this age using prescription drugs is suffering from back pain.