Pain and neuromuscular disease: the results of a survey.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this study was to evaluate pain frequency, severity, location, treatment, and relief in a population of adult patients with neuromuscular disorders (NMD).

DESIGN: The authors used a self-completion mail questionnaire from the Physical Medicine Clinic at the Lille University Medical Center (northern France). Two hundred eighty-one adults with a confirmed diagnosis of hereditary neuromuscular disease were mailed a questionnaire, which was returned by 125 subjects (response rate = 45%). The main outcome measures were mean motor deficiency scores (on the Brooke and Vignos scales), anxiety and depression scores, pain intensity (on a 0-10 numeric scale) and location, frequency of pain-aggravating situations, and pain treatment and relief.

RESULTS: Seventy-three percent of respondents reported pain and 62% reported chronic pain (defined as pain for at least 3 mos). The mean pain intensity was 6.1/10 with 40% reporting severe pain (a score of > or = 7). Forty-six percent and 16% of subjects had a high risk for anxiety and depression, respectively. The most common pain-aggravating situations were "walking," "standing," and "muscle stretching." Walking was more frequently cited as a pain-aggravating situation by the chronic pain population than by the acute pain population. Seventy percent of patients with pain had received at least one analgesic drug. Massage was the most frequently prescribed physical treatment.

CONCLUSIONS: Pain is a frequent symptom in adult patients with NMD and needs to be better characterized in this population. The use of painkillers and physical pain treatments did not seem to provide adequate relief for the patients studied here.

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