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Back Pain Among Female Tailors: A Review Of Occupational Risk And Preventive Strategies

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Abstract

Back pain is a prevalent musculoskeletal disorder, particularly among individuals engaged in repetitive and sedentary work. Female tailors represent a high-risk group due to prolonged sitting, inadequate ergonomic setups, and repetitive arm and shoulder movements. This review synthesizes current evidence on the causes, prevalence, pathophysiology, and preventive measures associated with occupational low back pain among female tailors. Recognizing the multifactorial origin of back pain in this occupational group highlights the need for targeted ergonomic interventions and education. Prevention strategies must include workplace modifications, awareness programs, and structured exercise regimens.

Keywords: Low Back Pain, Female Tailors, Occupational Health, Ergonomics, Musculoskeletal Disorders, Posture-Related Pain

Introduction

Low back pain (LBP) is recognized as one of the leading causes of years lived with disability globally. It affects people across all occupations, but it is especially common in professions that involve static postures and repetitive tasks. Female tailors, who spend long hours seated in fixed positions while engaging in sewing tasks, often suffer from musculoskeletal problems—most notably, back pain. This review article focuses on the occupational hazards contributing to back pain in female tailors, the mechanisms of pain development, and evidence-based approaches for prevention and management. Addressing this issue can improve quality of life and productivity among workers in the informal and small-scale tailoring sectors.

Occupational Risk Factors

Several occupational factors contribute to back pain in female tailors:

- Prolonged Sitting: Long hours of seated work without lumbar support contribute to postural fatigue and strain on the lower back.

- Poor Ergonomics: Lack of adjustable chairs, inadequate table height, and forward-leaning posture exacerbate spinal stress.

- Repetitive Movements: Continuous arm and shoulder use for sewing can lead to muscular imbalance and radiating discomfort in the back.

- Lack of Breaks and Movement: Limited opportunities for stretching or movement during working hours cause stiffness and poor circulation.

These conditions collectively result in both acute and chronic forms of LBP, with long-term consequences if not managed early.

Pathophysiology and Pain Mechanisms

Occupational back pain in tailors is often a combination of:

- Mechanical Low Back Pain: Due to poor posture and muscular overuse.

- Myofascial Pain Syndrome: Trigger points develop in overused muscles around the lumbar spine.

- Discogenic Pain: In some chronic cases, prolonged improper sitting may lead to early disc degeneration or herniation.

- Facet Joint Irritation: Due to hyperextension from slouching or backward-leaning posture.

Epidemiology and Evidence

Studies conducted in developing countries highlight a high prevalence of musculoskeletal symptoms among garment workers and tailors. Surveys in India, Bangladesh, and Southeast Asia report: 60–80% of tailors experience some form of LBP during their careers. Female tailors are more prone to pain due to physiological differences, dual roles (work and domestic responsibilities), and hormonal influences. Risk factors such as age, duration of work (>5 years), BMI, and lack of physical activity also correlate with higher back pain prevalence.

Preventive Strategies

Ergonomic Modifications

Use of chairs with lumbar support and adjustable heights, proper table height to prevent forward neck and shoulder lean, and footrests to maintain pelvic tilt and spinal curvature.

Work Habits

Encouraging micro-breaks every 30–45 minutes and regular stretching and mobility exercises during the workday.

Exercise and Rehabilitation

Core strengthening and back mobility exercises reduce recurrence. Yoga and physiotherapy programs are shown to be effective in improving function and reducing pain perception.

Education and Awareness

Tailors should be trained on proper posture and lifting techniques. Posters and visual reminders in workplaces promote healthy habits.

Discussion

The chronic nature of low back pain in female tailors stems from repetitive occupational strain and lack of ergonomic awareness. Despite the high burden, back pain in informal workers remains underreported and inadequately addressed in policy frameworks. A multidisciplinary approach combining ergonomic improvements, behavioral education, and physical rehabilitation shows promising results. Policy-level interventions—such as subsidized ergonomic furniture for home-based tailors and workshops for posture training—can significantly improve outcomes.

Conclusion

Low back pain among female tailors is a significant occupational health issue that can be mitigated through early intervention and workplace modifications. Empowering female tailors with knowledge, ergonomic tools, and physical wellness routines can drastically reduce the impact of chronic musculoskeletal conditions and enhance overall well-being and productivity.

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