

Prevalence, associated factors, and treatment-seeking behaviour related to musculoskeletal (MSK) pain among university-level cricketers in selected state universities in Western Province

M. Dilakshan¹, D. Samaranayake²

¹*Department of Allied Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

Cricket requires high levels of agility, coordination, and endurance making cricketers prone to musculoskeletal (MSK) pain due to repetitive movements, overuse, and intense training schedules. Limited evidence exists regarding MSK pain in Sri Lankan university cricketers. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence, associated factors, and treatment-seeking behavior related to MSK pain among university-level cricketers in selected state universities in Western Province. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 89 male cricketers who were active for at least six months in university cricket teams in five state universities. Data were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire incorporating socio-demographic details, training history, Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire and treatment-seeking behaviour. Data were analysed using SPSS-22.0 with descriptive statistics and Fisher's exact test to assess associations. Eighty-nine male participants were included, with a mean age of 23 years (SD = 1.37) and a mean BMI of 22.2 kg/m² (SD = 3.39). Participants reported an average training duration of 3.67 hours per session (SD = 0.79). A high prevalence (94.4%, n=84) of MSK pain was reported within the past 12 months. The most commonly affected region was lower back (39.3%, n=35), followed by shoulder (33.7%, n=30) and hip/thigh (21.3%, n=19). Statistically significant associations were found between higher training hours per session and MSK pain (p=0.042), and between high BMI and neck pain (p=0.042), while no association was found between role played in cricket and overall MSK pain. Treatment was sought by 66.3% of affected, predominantly from physiotherapists, with 58.4% reporting improvement. MSK pain is highly prevalent among university-level cricketers in Western Province. Prolonged training sessions appear to be contributing factors. Despite a majority seeking treatment, there remains a need for injury prevention strategies and better training load management for university-level cricketers in Western Province.

Keywords: *Musculoskeletal pain, Cricketers, Training load, Treatment-seeking*