

Metabolic syndrome is prevalent and undiagnosed in clients attending private practice physiotherapy: a cross-sectional study



Background

- Metabolic syndrome is a collection of metabolic risk factors, including abdominal obesity, elevated triglycerides, reduced HDL cholesterol, elevated blood pressure and elevated fasting blood glucose, that raise the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease.
- Globally it affects 25 per cent of the population and risk increases with age.



The questions

1. How prevalent is metabolic syndrome in clients presenting for primary care physiotherapy in private practice settings and what are the factors associated with it?
2. What are clients' attitudes toward lifestyle change?



The study

Self-reported and biometric data were collected from 230 patients presenting to private practices across metropolitan and regional Victoria to determine:

- the presence of metabolic syndrome as determined by the existence of three or more risk factors
- lifestyle (physical activity and diet) and socio-demographic characteristics
- attitude towards managing chronic disease through lifestyle changes.



The results

- Thirty-seven per cent of participants had metabolic syndrome but none knew they had it.
- Elevated waist circumference and high blood pressure were the most prevalent risk factors followed by elevated triglycerides.
- Metabolic syndrome was associated with older age, poorer socio-economic status and lower levels of physical activity but not diet.
- Participants with and without metabolic syndrome agreed that lifestyle change was important to manage chronic disease and would happily receive support from their physiotherapist.



Clinical implications

- There is a need for greater screening for metabolic risk factors in primary care.
- Private practice physiotherapists can make an impact by detecting metabolic syndrome, then providing advice and prescribing physical activity along with referral for appropriate management by GP or dietitian.

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