Chronic inflammatory back pain: axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA)

A form of chronic, inflammatory rheumatic disease which causes back pain, stiffness and loss of mobility and predominantly effects, but is not limited to, the spinal joints and ligaments.1,2

axSpA is made up of two populations2:

Non-radiographic axSpA (nr-axSpA) - patients with active disease but no x-ray evidence of damage. They will likely have MRI evidence of disease.3

Inflammatory back pain effects at least 700,000 adults in England and Wales.4

The mean age at symptom onset is 24-27 yrs.5

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AS usually occurs between the ages of 15-35 yrs.1

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Impact on the quality of life of axSpA patients:

Reduction in psychological, emotional and social well-being.8

Inability to carry out day-to-day activities.9

Limitations on social life.9

Significant economic burden in the form of healthcare costs and decreased work capacity.10

DO’s AND DON’Ts

axSpA is known to worsen with rest and can cause sleep disturbance and fatigue.1,7

Exercise can improve axSpA and is recommended to help relieve pain and stiffness and keep the spine flexible.11

ECONOMIC COSTS

Each year back pain generates healthcare costs of £1.6bn12 and loses UK businesses 4.9m working days.13

ADDITIONAL SYMPTOMS14:

1 Erythema nodosum.
2 Reiter's syndrome.
3 Psoriatic arthritis.
4 Reactive arthritis.
5 Ankylosing spondylitis.
6 Inflammatory bowel disease.
7 Chronic inflammatory back pain: axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA).
19 TUC Available at: http://www.backcare.org.uk/factsandfigures.
20 NASS. Managing your AS at work. 2013.