

Low Back Testing By Dynamometry *by the National Health Technology Advisory Panel*

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Low back pain is "a major medical disorder which affects a significant part of the population and has a great social and economic cost to the community. Musculoskeletal back injuries are the most frequent work-related injuries and have direct costs associated both with compensation payments and lost production...Low back pain [has] an annual incidence of 2-5 per cent of the population, and with 80 per cent of individuals having an occurrence at least once in their lifetime" (p.3).

A dynamometer is a force measuring device, and is the most important means for quantitatively assessing muscle function. However its use in diagnosis and prognosis is limited as "there are insufficient data on different types of persons and their performance on each machine...Those data that exist are based on small series of subjects which are not well defined. There is a lack of rigorous published studies..., defining the reliability of dynamometric measurements in different populations and for different types of disability" (p.21).

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