

# **High prevalence of restless legs syndrome among women with generalised pain - a population-based study in Dalarna, Sweden**

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## **Background**

This study investigated a population-based sample of middle-aged women. The study aimed to assess a possible association between restless legs syndrome (RLS) symptoms and the reported degree and localisation of pain with a specific focus on females with reported widespread pain.

## **Methods**

Three thousand and eighty-four (3084) out of 10 000 randomly selected women aged 18-64 years in Dalarna county, Sweden, responded to a questionnaire on lifestyle items, mental illness, anthropometrics, co-morbidities, medication, and number of areas with bodily pain (5 zones, grading 0-5). Subjects also answered four validated questions related to the occurrence of RLS symptoms.

## **Results**

RLS prevalence increased linearly along with the number of reported pain areas: No pain - 9.6%/ 1 zone – 23.9%/ 2 zones – 26.9%/ 3 zones – 39.7%/ 4 zones – 46.2%/ and 5 zones – 56.1% prevalence of RLS, respectively. Women with widespread pain (5 zones, no pain as a reference) experienced shorter total sleep time (385/424 minutes), longer sleep latency (42/18 minutes), increased daytime sleepiness (Epworth Sleepiness Scale 8/5) and reduced mental health (history of psychiatric diseases 54%/14%).

## **Conclusion**

This study shows a significantly increased prevalence of RLS among women with generalised pain in the general population. The degree of symptom burden generated by pain and RLS correlate with measures of disturbed sleep and impaired daytime function. Further studies are warranted to identify potential pathophysiological factors and improved treatment strategies.