

Review of: "Arthritis in East Africa: An Observational Study"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is an interesting and much needed population study of the musculoskeletal symptoms driving persons to access care. In these situations it is important to note that early disease may be ignored as many may not seek evaluation unless there is a significant impact on quality of life. This should be clearly stated as early disease was likely undetected and simply did not present for care.

Similarly, avoiding inferences based on type of or duration of manual work is best as this implies causality. The paucity of cervical spine pain compared to lumbar spine symptoms is one such example. Another interpretation of these findings is that there may be a heritable predisposition to mechanical alignment of the lumbar spine, that predisposes to this pain distribution.

The diagnoses are certainly restricted to evaluations that are clinically apparent, hence the prevalence of seropositivity, erosive disease cannot be calculated. As well as hip disease which may not be as easily apparent as knee arthritis.

I applaud the authors for undertaking this necessary evaluation as this is the first step in crafting healthcare needs of a given community, the healthcare resources required, and the economic impact of not treating, or under-diagnosing rheumatic conditions.